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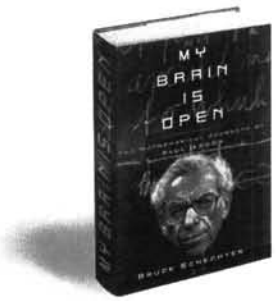

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THE MATHEMATICAL JOURNEYS OF PAUL ERDŐS

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If there were a Hall of Fame for eccentrics, Paul Erdős would certainly have been a charter member. One of the most brilliant mathematicians of our times, he was also one of the strangest. He kept no home, had few possessions, and cared little about anything but math—specifically, number theory. He wandered the globe, staying with his many friends and collaborators and attended math conferences, where he became the subject of more than enough anecdotes to fill two biographies.

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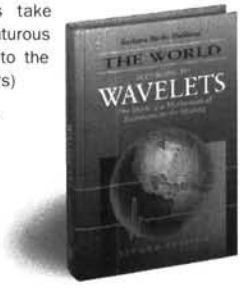

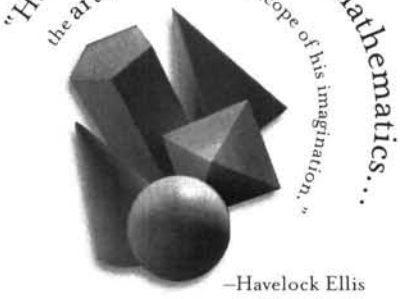

–Havelock Ellis

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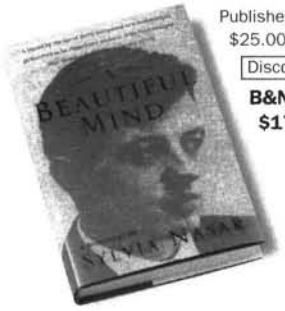
At the age of 21, John Forbes Nash, Jr., invented game theory. By the time he was 31, his brilliant career was over, cut short by the monstrous delusions of schizophrenia. For the next three decades, he roamed the Princeton campus unable to work, haunted by visions of extraterrestrial control. He might have languished there forever a slowly diminishing image of torment, except for two metaphorical lightning bolts: In the sixties, he awoke from his strange disease. And then, in 1994, he won a Nobel Prize. (Simon & Schuster)



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by Fan Chung and Ron Graham

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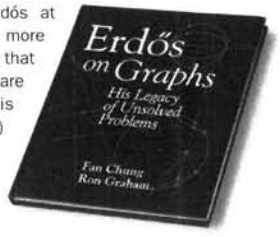

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CORRESPONDENCE

Perfectionism

To the editors:
Margaret Talbot's many valid points in "The Perfectionist" (July 20 & 27) are nearly obscured by what seems like personal animosity toward Bill McKibben. Let's not lose sight of the real point here—the need to strike a working balance between human beings and the Earth. That's not moralizing. That's pragmatism.

McKibben and Talbot make the same error when they suggest we must either act on population growth or on resource consumption. The answer is that we must do both. The scale of our impact is too great and the connections among population growth, resource consumption, and environmental impact too complex for a single strategy to work.

JUDITH JACOBSEN
Boulder, Colorado

To the editors:
Margaret Talbot is quite correct about "Voluntary Simplicity." It seems to be a novel approach to reducing our standard of living. However, her article glossed over the awesome implications of our burgeoning population, which is predicted to double to about 520 million by 2055.

If we ask whether the U.S. environment or its people will be better off with another 150, 250, even 500 million people, the answer is obvious: of course not. Our culture and economy, and the success of programs to safeguard the nation's rivers and wetlands, forests and prairies, and the air we breathe is rooted in a sustainable population.

DELL ERIKSSON
Minneapolis, Minnesota

To the editors:
Congratulations: Margaret Talbot has succeeded in her goal of being a "worse person" than Bill McKibben. Not because she espouses her own ideas or because her critique doesn't merit our consideration, but because she vindictively attempts to undermine McKibben's documentation of his family's struggle with the serious issue of population, family size, and the environmental and social implications of these decisions.

The fact that the title specifically identifies McKibben's book as "a personal argument" should have clued Talbot in to McKibben's "less reportorial and more personal" tone. The "taboo" of single-child families is alive and well, and it is fostered by just such righteous indignation as Talbot expresses here.

PETER COLLINS
Montpelier, Vermont

To the editors:
Rather than engage Bill McKibben's bold thesis in *Maybe One,* Margaret Talbot insults McKibben's character. What's missing is a thorough analysis of McKibben's accounting of climate science and population demographics. Instead, Talbot tries to paint anyone who suggests ways to make the world a better place as uncool. While this may work in the grammar school cafeteria, a convincing logical argument it is not. In fact, of Talbot's

THE CASE AGAINST JULY 4TH—SEBASTIAN MALLABY
THE NEW REPUBLIC
David Grann: My Journey to Jasper • Nurith Aizenman: The GOP's New Punching Bag
Is One of These Enough?
Population, the Environment, and the Morality of Family Size
By Margaret Talbot

piece, I would say it had the unbearable lightness of meanness.

JOHN PASSACANTANDO
Executive Director
Ozone Action
Washington, D.C.

American patriotism

To the editors:
Sebastian Mallaby doesn't appreciate our Fourth of July, nor the significance of our Constitution, as we do ("Stop the Celebration," July 20 & 27). Americans venerate the Constitution not because we've convinced ourselves that it was agreed to in idyllic times by like-minded men but because we are aware that it was agreed to by men more different in nature and more fractious in convention than should have succeeded at any joint endeavor.

The Constitution is a civil document. We do not mistake it for the Bible, the Koran, or any other religious book. When differences arise among us, even religious ones, we accept our responsibility to resolve them civilly. If our "excessive idealism" makes us an immature democracy, one that does not "settl[e] comfortably into worn routines and patterns," good. We will remain so as long as our shores are constantly being crossed by immigrants who press to contribute their ideas and enthusiastically participate in the imperfect but very workable society afforded by our Constitution.

KERRY CADDEN
McLean, Virginia

To the editors:
Sebastian Mallaby's "Stop the Celebration" is anything but a "case against the Fourth of July." He claims civil religion does not promote harmony, citing frequent disagreement. But it is our common adherence to ideals in the Constitution that allows us to disagree and yet live together. Consider Mallaby's own examples:

He claims the First Amendment has been "construed" to prohibit some campaign finance attempts. But rightly so. In a society in which the television media are privately owned, it is difficult to restrict access to them without restricting real freedoms as well. In our zeal to fix a problem, we might forget these values—but for the Constitution. It is a moral, not legal, obstacle.

Similarly, Mallaby notes that militia members make up for their lack of popular support through constitutional appeals. Bully for them. Our Constitution allows for extremism. It acknowledges that prevailing opinion (in the words of the British philosopher J.S. Mill) is not infallible. That's something to celebrate.

HANS NOEL
Los Angeles, California

To the editors:
It is the very refusal of Americans to be told what their national documents (e.g., the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, the Gettysburg Address) mean by an "interpretational authority . . . like the Vatican" that keeps America free.

As public documents, these works are owned and used by everybody: they are put forward by politicians as means of uniting our national interests, they are used by "fringe groups" to support their causes, and they are debated freely among groups of individuals.

KRISTINE J. ELLIS
Chicago, Illinois

To the editors:
The placid British-style unity that Sebastian Mallaby describes is precisely what the Founding Fathers wanted to avoid when they put their signatures to the words "pursuit of happiness." A passive populous was never in the cards.

J. DOUGLAS JOHNSON
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

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Easy does it

To the editors:

Jacob Heilbrunn mischaracterizes those foreign policy elites who exhort economic development and promotion of the rule of law as policy vehicles for facilitating democracy in China ("Control Freaks," July 20 & 27).

Because the locus of central authority in Communist regimes is the party apparatus rather than the state, divestment of the former directly through political liberalization can risk chaos, as the current course of Russian history demonstrates. Alternatively, the enshrinement of the rule of law and the development of vital intermediate institutions of civil society can serve as constitutive means for achieving a stable transition from Communist autocracy to pluralist democracy.

MATTHEW S. SCHWEBER
New York, New York

Social insecurity

To the editors:

It was clear from Jonathan Cohn's TRB article on privatizing Social Security ("Profit Motives," July 13) that he had not read our work and that he has a rather peculiar view of the world of savings and retirement.

Cohn confuses the central point: He agrees that the poor and minorities tend to gain less from Social Security because they have comparatively short life spans (although, in fact, Hispanics have above-average life spans), but he writes that this is more than compensated for by the social insurance aspect of the system. But privatization does not mean abandoning the social insurance aspect of Social Security or the coverage for disability that also disproportionately helps African Americans. All but the most radical privatization proposals would leave these features intact.

What privatization does seek to do is raise the general rate of return and, hence, retirement income. The current system provides a miserable return for everyone—just a slightly less miserable return for the poor. Cohn also believes that allowing people to invest some of their own Social Security taxes in private accounts would be a mistake because blacks and Hispanics, being relatively poor as a group, cannot be expected to invest as wisely as other Americans. I can only suggest that he share this interesting insight on investment competence at a few town-hall meetings with minorities and take note of their reaction to it. In any case, our figures show that the rate of return from Social Security is so bad that workers would be comfortably ahead even if they placed their contributions into the safest investments available, such as Treasury bills.

Cohn's solution is to allow private investment of your Social Security money but have the government do it for you—government officials being much smarter than you or I.

Of course, the really great thing about his solution, writes Cohn, is that it keeps greedy Wall Street investment houses (who profit from generating good returns to investors) out of the picture. And he accuses privatization advocates of being motivated by ideology?

STUART M. BUTLER
The Heritage Foundation
Washington, D.C.

Jonathan Cohn replies:

I did read Heritage's work. And my article explained why I believe its arguments—which Stuart Butler makes again here—are flawed.

To the editors:

Jonathan Cohn finds arguments in favor of privatizing Social Security "morally dubious." But what about the moral merits of the current system? Because it is an intergenerational transfer system, there are differences in how much each person contributes and receives. Social Security only provides a politically defined entitlement; if Congress manipulates the trust fund or reduces benefits, as it is already doing, future recipients are out of luck. The current system also assumes that the government should take from individuals the primary responsibility for prudent retirement planning. And, while Cohn is right to endorse minimal security for the elderly poor, he does not explain why government should try to create greater equality among the elderly than among the middle-aged.

Privatization, combined with a minimal collective provision for the truly disadvantaged, is morally superior on all these counts. Because it enables each generation to provide for its own future needs, there is no generational inequity. By treating retirement accounts as personal property, it shields savings and benefits from political manipulation. It encourages individuals to exercise basic virtues in making decisions about their own futures. And it takes away the government's power to determine winners and losers in the game of coercive redistribution.

FRANK LECHNER
Atlanta, Georgia

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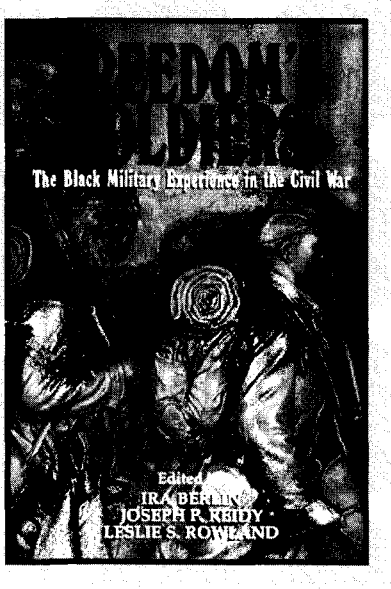

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Freedom's Soldiers

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Ira Berlin,
Joseph P. Reidy, *and*
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FROM WASHINGTON

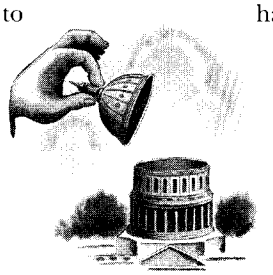
Take the Fourth

After his appearance before Kenneth Starr's grand jury, President Clinton said that he had answered "questions about my private life, questions no American citizen would ever want to answer." But, "as to a very few highly intrusive questions," his lawyer, David Kendall, declared, "in order to preserve personal privacy and institutional dignity," the president "gave candid but not detailed answers." Clinton appears to have followed a version of the strategy proposed by Nathan Lewin, who urged him in *The New York Times* last week to decline to discuss the lurid details of his affair with Monica Lewinsky by invoking "the zone of privacy protected by the Fourth Amendment."

Because few commentators believe that the privacy claim would stand up in court—Lewin himself called his own argument "legally unsound"—Starr may try to recall Clinton to the grand jury, issuing a formal subpoena to force the president to answer his prurient questions. Starr has also recalled Lewinsky to ask her precisely who touched whom, with what, and where. But, although a presidential subpoena would precipitate a constitutional confrontation of the highest order, the battle would be well worth fighting. For the constitutional roots of Clinton's privacy claim are, in fact, far sounder than most judges and scholars have acknowledged.

It's now conventional wisdom to argue that, in a similar predicament, an ordinary suspect in a criminal investigation should plead the Fifth. But, as Monica Lewinsky's immunity deal shows, the Fifth Amendment privilege against self-incrimination offers very little protection to innocent citizens who want to tell the truth but who also want to avoid answering leering questions about their legal but embarrassing sexual conduct. If a prosecutor really wants to humiliate you, all he has to do is grant you or your sexual partner immunity from future prosecutions, and suddenly your shared right to remain silent about your sexual secrets disappears. Moreover, suspects aren't allowed to plead the Fifth selectively. If you agree to answer six questions about your sex life, you may lose the right to object if the seventh question becomes really embarrassing.

Instead of pleading the Fifth, then, Clinton was correct to plead the Fourth. The Fourth Amendment protects "[t]he right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures." As the eighteenth-century battle over John Wilkes's diaries suggests, prying invasions of sexual privacy were precisely the kind of unreasonable searches and seizures that the framers of the Constitution meant to forbid. And it's hard to imagine how citizens aren't searched and seized when they're commanded to appear before a grand jury and threatened with prison for contempt of court if they fail to answer a prosecutor's lascivious questions.



At the turn of the century, the Supreme Court recognized that a grand jury subpoena for a suspect's business records was clearly a seizure of his "papers and effects." Unfortunately, in the 1970s, the Court began to narrow privacy protections, holding implausibly that subpoenas to appear before a grand jury simply weren't covered by the Fourth Amendment. The perverse result: The Fourth Amendment now protects objects more than persons where subpoenas are concerned. Still, in other cases, the Court has stressed that the Fourth Amendment protects people, not places, and is triggered any time the government violates a citizen's "reasonable expectations of privacy." And, in the wake of polls suggesting that 63 percent of Americans agree with Clinton that the Lewinsky affair is "nobody's business" but his family's, it appears that most citizens have a reasonable expectation that the details of consensual sexual affairs won't be forcibly exposed by the state.

In a properly functioning legal system, as Akhil Amar of Yale Law School argued years ago, citizens who were asked overly intrusive questions before a grand jury would be able to object that their Fourth Amendment rights were being violated. A judge would then decide whether or not the questions were "reasonable," balancing the seriousness of the alleged crime and the relevance of the question against the seriousness of the intrusion on personal privacy.

Because the Fourth Amendment, unlike the Fifth, applies in civil as well as criminal trials, it might have also saved the president from having to answer questions about his relationship with Lewinsky during his deposition in the Paula Jones case. Under the ordinary rules of civil discovery, when Jones's lawyer, James Fisher, asked Clinton whether he had sexual relations with Lewinsky, Clinton's lawyer, Robert Bennett, could have asked Judge Susan Webber Wright to allow Clinton not to answer the question, to protect him from "annoyance, embarrassment, oppression, or undue burden."

Bennett chose not to ask for a protective order, perhaps because he thought the request would be politically embarrassing. But, if Judge Wright had been more sensitive to Fourth Amendment values, she would have ruled out of bounds the entire inquiry into whether or not Clinton rewarded women who had sex with him. To prove Jones's implausible theory, her lawyers had to compel testimony about consensual affairs that innocent people preferred to keep private. Rather than allowing this cavalier invasion of the privacy of Clinton and Lewinsky, a judge sensitive to the Fourth Amendment's requirement that all searches be "reasonable" would have prevented the questions from being asked.

"I intend to reclaim my family life for my family," Clinton said after his grand jury appearance. "It's nobody's business but ours." Unfortunately, once unreasonable questions are asked and answered, it's impossible to reconstruct the boundaries between public and private life that have been destroyed. In the months ahead, as Starr obsessively rubs the country's face in the most minute and humiliating details of the president's sex life, it may seem quixotic to lament the erosion of privacy protections rather than the president's indiscretions. But, as the philosopher Thomas Nagel eloquently writes in the latest *Times Literary Supplement*, "Civilization is a delicate structure that allows wildly different and complex individuals to co-operate peacefully and effectively only if not too much strain is put upon it by the introduction of disruptive private material, to which no collective response is necessary or possible. Americans who recognize this fact can only look on in shame at the destructive spectacle now being acted out by a group of childish and powerful figures who have never understood it."

JEFFREY ROSEN

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SEPTEMBER 7, 1998

MOMENT OF TRUTH

It's official: Bill Clinton is a lout. Not only did he use one of the temples of our democracy, the White House, as a playground for sex with an intern who was barely older than his own daughter. He also spun weasel words under oath and then looked the American people in the eye and lied some more, thus doing his part to perpetuate a seven-month ordeal that has both deeply embarrassed the nation he was elected to lead and eroded critical privileges of the office he holds. He did all that, and then, when he was finally cornered and forced to come clean, and had one last chance to end the country's agony simply by being completely honest and sincerely contrite, he blew it.

Instead, he denatured his words of "regret" and responsibility-taking with rancor directed explicitly at Kenneth Starr—and implicitly at the ring of cheerleaders around the independent counsel, from Paula Jones to Richard Mellon Scaife. Conceived by the president in the angry aftermath of his humiliating interrogation by Starr's inquisitors, assented to by the first lady and other hard-line members of the Clinton inner circle, the defiant rhetoric instantly repolarized Bimbroglio. As they were intended to do, Clinton's words roused his die-hard supporters—but they also inflamed his die-hard foes. The unrepentant apology—if, indeed, such a thing could be said to exist—left many people agreeing with the reported instant assessment of Utah Senator Orrin Hatch: "What a jerk." And it brought forth, almost instantaneously, vocal calls for resignation and impeachment by Republicans who, until now, had managed to keep such threats largely to themselves. As a result, it is now less likely that we will manage to "move on," as the president so earnestly wants to do. Thus the all-too-accurate headline in *The Washington Post*: "STARR PUSHES FORWARD DESPITE CLINTON ADMISSION."

Is there a sensible way out of this polarized and, for most Americans, disgusting situation? Can the country extricate itself from the fight between the win-at-all-costs White House and a win-at-all-costs independent counsel? Clearly, we must hold the president appropriately accountable—but we must do so in a way that will enhance, rather than further damage, the values and institutional balances of our democracy.

As we attempt to analyze that question, the first point to acknowledge is that the president of the United States has largely brought this excruciating mess upon himself. The "critical lapse in judgment" that was his dalliance with Monica Lewinsky began in November 1995. That was less than four years after the Gennifer Flowers flap, a political near-death experience that should have at least made him cautious about cheating on his wife, even if it didn't make him faithful to her. It was also the eve of a tough reelection battle, one in which his political enemies were planning to use every speck of dirt against him that they could find. What was the president thinking? Certainly he wasn't thinking about the potential risks to his family, friends, and fellow Democrats.

Then, too, there's all the poetic justice. Like the fact that Clinton has run afoul of an independent counsel law that he shouldn't have signed. Like the fact that the elastic sexual harassment law that Paula Jones exploited is largely the handiwork of the political forces for whom this president speaks. If it has become harder for Clinton to protect the privacy he rightly prizes—because it has become harder for all of us to separate what is private and personal from what is political and litigable—it is in part due to the fervor with which some feminist Democrats (led by the first lady herself) have demanded an ever-stricter sexual harassment code.

It's true that, in this Oprahfied age, all politicians indulge in the hypocritical politicization of their personal lives. Everyone wants to talk about his personal life, as long as the discussion is limited to the solid marriage, the cheerful kids, and the hardscrabble ancestors. (Richard Lugar's forgettable 1996 campaign for president revolved around the fact that he had never been divorced.) It is only when the press starts probing the underside that politicians cry privacy. In this regard, Bill Clinton was no innovator. But, in other ways, he did pioneering work in the personalization, and hence, trivialization, of the presidency (and not just by telling MTV that he preferred briefs to boxers). This was a man who advertised his emotional makeup as a unique qualification for the office—a man who practically begged us to judge him not by what he would do as a president but how he would feel about us as First Pal. He told us to vote for him because he would feel our pain. Now, friends, family, staff, and, yes, lovers ask in dismay: Can this man really feel anyone's pain but his own?

Which brings us to Kenneth Starr's side of the ledger. And what strikes us first about the independent counsel's

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investigation is the near-total absence of any institutional constraint or official mechanism of accountability. Under current law, it seems, independent counsels can basically investigate whomever they want for as long as they want, without regard to the factors that normally rein in prosecutors: budgetary constraints, prosecutorial discretion, or political supervision. No such normally constrained prosecutor would be convening a grand jury to investigate alleged perjury about adultery in a deposition in a civil case that had been dismissed. Then, too, it has been impossible to avoid the impression that Starr took on this role at the behest of the president's most committed ideological foes, who arranged to have Starr appointed after his moderate Republican predecessor, Robert Fiske, did not produce the president's head on a platter.

Similarly, the Paula Jones lawsuit, permitted to proceed by a myopic Supreme Court, was the product of a campaign financed by Clinton-haters whose intent was to overturn a presidency, not to vindicate a woman's rights. The case drew the attention of that weird and mischievous pair, Lucianne Goldberg and Linda Tripp, who contrived devious ways to collect the evidence that would create the impetus for Starr's inquiry into the Monica-Bill affair.

There may not be a vast right-wing conspiracy, as the first lady claims, but there sure was a small right-wing conspiracy. All of these people—the Jones crowd, Goldberg and Tripp, Starr's supporters—are acting in ways calculated to reverse two presidential elections. And Clinton won those elections in spite of the fact that the public knew, broadly speaking, about both his extramarital dalliances and his propensity for shading the truth (which is, of course, an integral part of any adulterer's behavioral repertoire). In other words, the Starr investigation is about the criminalization of character flaws on which the public has already passed a binding political judgment—twice.

This is not only disproportionate. It is undemocratic. Democracy also provides the best argument against calling on Clinton to resign. His personal disgrace at the moment must be weighed against other factors. The most important of these is the precedent that he would set by leaving as a result of charges stemming from unofficial conduct, some of which took place even before he was president—and doing so before any formal, accountable, democratically constituted proceeding against him had even begun. (Richard Nixon resigned only after impeachment articles had been voted by the House Judiciary Committee, under circumstances which made his eventual removal from office by the Senate inevitable.)

Americans are clearly weighing Bill Clinton's alleged offenses both on their own terms and in light of the accomplishments of Clinton's tenure. Among the accomplishments the public, and this magazine, have noted are a humming economy, a balanced budget, rising wages, new free-trade agreements, and the preservation and streamlining of the welfare state. For all his flaws, this president has taken liberalism in a more centrist, and hence more sustainable, direction. Ideally, a president should have high moral character—but many people will tolerate a president without such character if they're satisfied with the condition of the country during his tenure. So far, at least, that seems to be what the majority of Americans think.

To be sure, we have not shied away from criticizing Clinton's policy leadership when warranted. And this week brought a new and powerful reason to question the job Clinton is doing. On August 14, we learned that, even as the administration has been publicly promoting a get-tough policy on Iraq, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright—acting, no doubt, with the approval of her superiors—has been undermining United Nations surprise inspections of Saddam Hussein's nuclear and chemical weapons arsenals. Here, certainly, is a lie with real and direct implications for the national interest—not to mention the safety of the world. Here, certainly, is a chance for this damaged president to regain credibility by changing course and honoring his past commitments.

Meanwhile, another group that has been evading responsibility and accountability for the last seven months is Congress. And it has been doing so under the guise of fastidious responsibility: "It is very premature for anyone to make any judgment pro or con until we've actually had a chance to review [Starr's] report," Newt Gingrich said after Clinton's speech. Translation: "We Republicans are perfectly content to let this bloodletting by the independent counsel continue." But, all along, Congress has had the power to get the facts. It can hire staff attorneys, subpoena witnesses, and gather evidence if enough of its members seriously believe that an impeachable offense may have been committed.

That is, after all, precisely the role prescribed for Congress by the Constitution. This could have been done quietly and deliberately, with no sensational hearings—at least until the facts were in. But Congress hasn't done so for two reasons. One, Ken Starr has been the perfect stalking horse—he can do Congress's dirty work without the obvious stain of partisanship. Two, Clinton's enemies know that the country isn't ready to impeach a president over sex, and lies about sex, and they don't want to have to take the heat.

Thus, the sooner Ken Starr slaps his report on the desk of Henry Hyde, the House Judiciary Committee chairman, the better. Let the debate begin. Let Congress sift through all the seamy evidence. Let it consider whether or not Bill Clinton's conduct constitutes the kind of high crime or misdemeanor the Founding Fathers had in mind. And let it then decide, on the record and in front of the voters, what to do.

Indeed, the excesses of the independent counsel confirm the wisdom of the Constitution's impeachment provisions, which were crafted by the Founding Fathers to the specific exclusion of the kind of criminal process we are now witnessing. Impeachment, too, seems remarkably well-suited for the kind of morally complex wrongdoing embodied in the allegations against Bill Clinton. The investigation of a president is an inherently political matter. It should be handled by elected representatives

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who are accountable to the voters, not by a prosecutor who is accountable to no one. All of the aggravating factors attendant upon Clinton's behavior—his bare-faced lie to the American people on national television, other manipulative lies to leaders of his own party who depend on his word of honor—will be factored into these politicians' decisions. So will all the mitigating circumstances the voters are taking into account in considering Clinton—the private nature of his alleged activity, his successful record in public policy.

Like most people, our bet based on what's known to date is that the Republican Congress will consider Starr's report and conclude that, while repugnant, the president's conduct does not warrant his removal from office. That assessment could change, of course, in light of future revelations, particularly about the extent to which the president may have attempted to orchestrate perjury by others in the Paula Jones case. But, assuming the facts remain roughly as they are now, Clinton would, and should, be permitted to serve out his term.

Does that mean he gets off scot free? Hardly. The last seven months of public humiliation—and the months of further humiliation to come, compounded by the indelible black mark this episode will leave on his page in history—constitute ample punishment. Indeed, it would be an exquisitely appropriate one for this most self-regarding of political leaders. You might even call it justice. •

NOTEBOOK

PARDON BETTY: It remains unclear whether members of President Clinton's inner circle really do—or should—feel betrayed, as the press has insisted. (See "Betrayed," by Dana Milbank, page 11.) But at least one former presidential intimate clearly has a right to feel used: the president's astoundingly loyal secretary, Betty Currie. She is caught up in the one element of Bimbroglio with the heaviest potential legal consequences: alleged obstruction of justice. When the scandal first began to close in on the president, he allegedly had Lewinsky return the gifts he'd given her to Currie. Clinton got her into this mess, and Clinton has the power to get her out. He should give her a presidential pardon—now. Sure, he might pay a small political price, and setting Currie free could somehow affect the byzantine "joint defense agreement" by which she, the president, and all the other possible White House defendants are tied together. But didn't the president also tell us that "too many innocent people" have been hurt? It might be nice if it were actually Clinton who committed the first decent act of this whole sordid drama.

ALL THE NEWS THAT'S FIT TO REPRINT: As we point out in our lead editorial, Bimbroglio is not the only scandal involving presidential deception that has been in the news this week. For, even as the Clinton administration was affirming its determination to hold Iraq to U.N. weapons inspections, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright was quietly quashing UNSCOM's inspection of two important sites. While it will assuredly never lead to Clinton's impeachment, the UNSCOM scandal hinges on a deception far more consequential than Clinton's denials about sex. So we thought it might be interesting to compare the coverage *The Washington Post*—which, in all fairness, broke the UNSCOM scandal—gave to the two stories. Our finding: Over the course of six days, the *Post* devoted 7,040 words to the UNSCOM scandal and 80,289 words to Bimbroglio. We'll keep tabs on this comparative count as the two stories develop. Meanwhile, one question remains: Just how *do* editors fill up so much space about a sex scandal whose principal subjects do so little talking? *The New York Times*' August 18 issue demonstrated an original approach: the paper actually ran essentially the exact same full-length article *twice* under two different headlines. As it happens, the story was about how little the press had to say during Clinton's testimony on August 17. Apparently, the *Times* has a new motto: If you can't think of anything to say, say it twice. •

THE HARD QUESTIONS

YOU BET YOUR LIFE

By Michael J. Sandel

With the Dow still well over 8000, some investors are putting their money in a ghoulish commodity—the life insurance policies of AIDS patients and others diagnosed with terminal illnesses. Call it the death futures market. It works like this: Suppose a dying person holds a life insurance policy worth $100,000. But he needs money now for expensive medical care, or perhaps simply to live well in the short time he has remaining. An investor buys the policy for $50,000 and takes over payment of the premiums. When the original policyholder dies, the investor collects the $100,000—at a profit of roughly $50,000.

At first glance, it seems like a good deal all around. The dying policyholder gains access to cash while he can still enjoy it, and the investor turns a handsome profit. This principle of mutual benefit underlies the viatical settlement industry, which arose as the AIDS epidemic of the 1980s met the market fever of the 1990s. ("Viatical" comes from the Latin term for money and provisions supplied Roman officials setting out on a journey.)

As with all investments, however, there is a catch. And, in this case, the financial catch contains a moral complication. While viaticals guarantee the investor a

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fixed amount when the sick person dies, the annual rate of return depends on how long the patient lives. If death comes in a year, the investor who paid $50,000 for a $100,000 policy makes a killing, so to speak—a 100 percent annual return. If the patient lives for two years, the investor must wait twice as long for the same payout, so his annual rate of return is cut in half. If the patient makes a miraculous recovery and lives for many years, the investor may make next to nothing.

The financial risk in viaticals creates a morally perverse feature not present in other investments: the investor must hope for the early demise of the person whose life insurance he buys. The longer the person hangs on, the lower the annual rate of return.

Advocates for the viatical industry obscure this point by emphasizing the service they provide terminally ill persons who would otherwise die without access to the cash they need. But the interest of investors and the 60 companies that broker viatical settlements is clear: "There have been some phenomenal returns, and there have been horror stories where people live longer," Wm. Scott Page, president of a Fort Lauderdale viatical company, told *The St. Petersburg Times*. "That's sort of the excitement of the viatical settlement. There is no exact science in predicting someone's death."

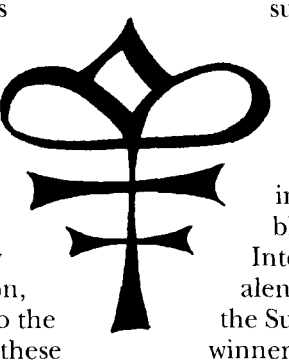
One such "horror story" recently led a Michigan investor to threaten to sue a broker for selling him the life-insurance policy of a New York AIDS victim who has refused to die. Five years ago, the investor bought the policy of Kendall Morrison, then desperately ill. But, thanks to protease inhibitors, Morrison, now 35, has returned to stable health, much to the dismay of the investor. "They kept sending me these FedExes and calling. It was like, 'Are you still alive?'" Morrison told *The New York Times*, which first reported his situation.

The viatical industry as a whole, which does $450 million in business a year, has a keen interest in the prompt passing of the ailing souls whose policies it buys. In 1996, an AIDS conference in Vancouver confirmed breakthroughs in new drugs. The good news for AIDS victims was bad news for the viatical business. The stock price of Dignity Partners Inc., a San Francisco firm, plunged from $14.50 earlier in the year to $1.38.

Worried by the risk of longer-living AIDS patients, viatical companies are seeking to diversify to cancer and other terminal diseases. In a bulletin posted on the Viatical Association of America's website, Executive Director William Kelley sounds optimistic about prospects for future growth: "Compared to the number of people with AIDS, the number of people with cancer, severe cardiovascular diseases, and other terminal illnesses is huge." A few years ago, the industry bought 90 percent of its policies from AIDS patients. The figure has since dropped to about 60 percent. Some viatical companies are reaching beyond the ranks of the terminally ill to solicit business from healthy senior citizens.

Defenders of the viatical business might argue that theirs is not the only investment that amounts to a wager with death; the life insurance business also turns probabilities of life expectancy into a commodity. But there is an important moral difference between life insurance and viaticals: in the case of life insurance, the company that sells me a policy is betting for me, not against me. The longer I live, the more money it makes. With viaticals, the financial interest is reversed. From the company's point of view, the sooner I die, the better.

Why should I care if, somewhere, an investor is hoping I die? Perhaps I shouldn't, provided he doesn't act on his hope or call too often to ask of my condition. But even market enthusiasts would find it difficult to embrace the full consequences of treating a bet against life as just another business. Consider: If the viatical industry is morally comparable to life insurance, shouldn't it have the same right to lobby on behalf of its interests? And, if the insurance industry has the right to lobby for its interest in prolonging life (through mandatory seat-belt laws or anti-drug policies), shouldn't the viatical industry have the right to lobby for its interest in hastening death (through reduced federal funding for AIDS or cancer research)? The viatical industry has not undertaken any such lobbying. But, if it is morally permissible to invest in the likelihood that certain people will die sooner rather than later, why isn't it morally permissible to promote public policies that further that end?



The best analogy to viaticals is not life insurance but "death pools," a form of gambling that has recently become popular on the Internet. Death pools are the cyberspace equivalent of traditional office pools on who will win the Super Bowl, except that, instead of picking the winner of a football game, players compete to predict which well-known people will die in a given year.

More than a dozen websites now offer versions of this morbid game, including "Celebrity Death Pool," "Dying for Dollars," and "Ghoul Pool," according to recent stories in *The New York Times*, *The Boston Globe*, and *The San Francisco Examiner*. The game typically works this way: For a modest entry fee, contestants submit a list of ten celebrities they think are likely to die by year's end. Whoever makes the most correct calls wins the jackpot (in some cases, as much as $7,000). Serious players do not make their death picks lightly, but scour entertainment magazines and tabloids for news of ailing stars. Current favorites include Bob Hope, Strom Thurmond, Katharine Hepburn, Pope John Paul II, Boris Yeltsin, Ronald Reagan, the Queen Mother, and Milton Berle. Since hundreds had Frank Sinatra on their lists, the greatest glory goes to the prescient few who put their money on long shots like Princess Diana or John Denver.

The analogy is not perfect: viaticals serve the socially useful purpose of financing the last days of the dying, whereas death pools are strictly a source of profit and entertainment. But the pointlessness of death pools highlights the moral wrong that viaticals share. Both are bets against life that coarsen the culture and make death a commodity. •

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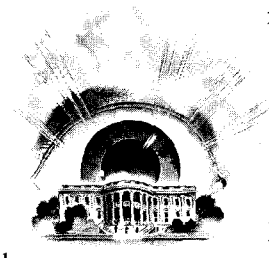
WHITE HOUSE WATCH

BETRAYED

By Dana Milbank

The howls of "betrayal" began even before Ken Starr's questions to the president ended Monday afternoon. "As aides here wait for this testimony to be over, it is very hard to describe the sense of betrayal many feel," reported CNN's John King. By the next morning's papers, the whole administration seemed to be reeling from the treachery of its boss. "Within the White House last night, there were crosscurrents of fury and betrayal," *The Boston Globe* announced. "Shock and betrayal" were the *Chicago Tribune*'s words, and "the sting of his betrayal" was the *Los Angeles Times*' version. *The New York Times* weighed in with a front-page story reporting aides' "feelings of betrayal."



The reports were half-right. There was indeed a feeling of betrayal in the White House Monday night—but among the press corps, not the White House staff. Clinton aides, to be sure, were ready to impale the chief. But for them to claim shock and betrayal after these seven months—and, indeed, these last six years—would reveal a profound naïveté, if not self-deception, about the Clinton character. The press, on the other hand, had good reason to feel let down. Clinton hadn't performed the groveling mea culpa the pundits demanded. We wanted Clinton on his knees to justify seven months of pursuit.

So determined was the media's quest for Clinton's blood, in fact, that, on Monday afternoon, reporters paid little notice to the spilling of actual blood at the White House. As I sat waiting with dozens of journalists in the briefing room during the president's testimony, a young man at the White House gate on Pennsylvania Avenue stabbed himself in the neck with a screwdriver. Noticing the crowd and the ambulance through the window, one woman asked what was going on. "Stabbing," a fellow replied. "Oh," the woman said, and both returned to their reading, waiting for the day's really gory news.

By nightfall, the scene had come to resemble a Super Bowl pre-game show more than a presidential adultery admission. Twenty-eight cameras lined up on the White House lawn, each with flood lights aimed at the building. Across Lafayette Park, another battery of lights filled the horizon; network anchors had taken to the rooftops so they could use the White House backdrop. Inside the briefing room, harried technicians coordinated the arsenal of wire and wattage. "I've got three crews out on the lawn and one still at the gate," a network techie complained. The photographers, meanwhile, were annoyed that the White House insisted on doing the lighting itself for the president's address, making the light softer than usual, to add tenderness. "Very soft," groused one photographer. "So you can see his tears," said another.

Media contempt for the president's behavior, always oozing during the administration's seven months of stonewalling, poured freely as the speech approached. As Clinton appeared on a TV screen in the briefing room, a gaggle of some two dozen journalists gathered around. The president, in a dark suit and light-blue tie, sat like a corpse as a woman applied makeup and fixed his hair. "Clinton's likely to look over at the camera lady and say, 'Nice legs, honey,'" predicted one man in the press mob. But, instead, the president was looking solemn, contrite. The briefing room commentary continued:

"He's saying, 'I'm bad, I'm bad—but I'm still sexy.'"

"He *is* practicing. He's practicing the sincerity."

"He's getting in the zone now. He's in the zone."

"He's building up the water in his eyes."

And then, Clinton began. When he said, "I misled people, including even my wife," there were gasps even from jaded briefing-room veterans. But, when he said "this matter is between me, the two people I love most—my wife and our daughter—and our God," some people laughed out loud at his religious reference.

The speech ended too soon—after four minutes, half of which were taken up with an angry attack on Starr. ABC's Sam Donaldson, apparently unsatisfied, cornered Mike McCurry, demanding to know what had happened to an earlier, more contrite version of the speech. But McCurry turned and walked away. "I ain't spinning," he said. "A speech is a speech." Donaldson bellowed to the emptying room that Nixon, too, after a year of Watergate, had said that it was time to get back to the nation's business. The UPI's Helen Thomas cut Donaldson off. "Sam," she said, "you're wallowing." "Well," Donaldson replied, "I'm going to wallow on."

The party was over, quite literally. Remains of burgers and Chinese food lay scattered. Half a veggie pizza topped a smelly mountain of garbage in the back. Two other uneaten pies sat nearby. "There's plenty of pizza," a TV technician offered, but there were no takers. This pack was hungry for presidential disgrace, and they went home unsated. As stragglers filed out, the only sounds left were the righteous voices of Orrin Hatch and John Ashcroft on television. A cleaning woman walked in, surveyed the mess, and pursed her lips in disgust.

As the press sulked outside, Clinton staffers in the next room were understandably doing some wallowing of their own. Two women smiled weakly at each other. One young man, probably not even Monica Lewinsky's age, looked up at the television as if he might cry. For a whole day, work in the White House had virtually ceased. The residence was sealed off during the testimony. At ten o'clock in the evening, most of the lights were still on

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in the Old Executive Office Building, its occupants huddling before their TV sets. After the speech, a few of the senior aides who were with Clinton in the Map Room offered the president an encouraging word, then filed back to the West Wing without their leader.

By late the next morning, the president still hadn't come to the office. "Yesterday was a tough day," Erskine Bowles told the staff at the morning meeting, according to one participant. "But let's just roll up our sleeves. We've got a lot of work to do." In fact, aides said, Clinton would turn his Martha's Vineyard jaunt into a bit of a working vacation, doing public events on the patients' bill of rights, the environment, and crime. Aides said the president would not elaborate—or apologize—to his demoralized staff.

Some of those I talked to were angry at him for dragging it out and disgusted that he really did something so boorish. Some lamented his family's public disgrace. Others expressed weariness at Clinton's endless semantic hair-splitting. "This is the classic 'I didn't inhale,'" said one top lieutenant. "I wish he didn't have that tendency. It's something very painful." But, mostly, staffers were less aggrieved by his sexual indiscretion than by the resulting political impotency. "The job did not get easier yesterday," a senior adviser told me. "We armed up our enemies. It's going to be a tougher climb." Added another aide: "This prevented him and everybody who works for him from having the year we could've had."

Yet the same aides who admitted to anger and pain didn't buy the reports of shock and betrayal. White House staffers, especially those who rode out the bimbo eruptions of 1992, know Clinton's indiscretions and his strained relationship with the truth better than outsiders do. Clinton's advisers were kidding themselves if they thought he was incapable of having sex with an intern. "Everybody's been living with this for a long time," said one. "You had to know it was possible. I don't think anybody *could* be shocked." And new staffers had to have joined the Clinton White House with their eyes wide open. Clinton himself said it best back in 1992, albeit in a different context, when he attacked George Bush's economics: "Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me."

It also seems pretentious and self-aggrandizing for lowly White House aides to claim to be betrayed by the president of the United States. Betrayal is more personal than that, and only a few people outside Clinton's own family were close enough to him to qualify. Rahm Emanuel, Paul Begala, and Ann Lewis, the three who denied the sexual charges most vigorously, come to mind. But they are also some of the White House's most battle-hardened warriors, not the types to be moaning about Clinton's betrayal.

Some Clinton loyalists may feel swindled by Clinton because of an implicit moral bargain that, despite his past misdeeds, he would keep his zipper up once he got into the White House. Clinton-aide-turned-critic George Stephanopoulos is said to make such an argument in his forthcoming book. But White House staffers have had seven months to realize there is no such bargain. Most gave him the benefit of the doubt during the Lewinsky standoff. Once it became clear three weeks ago that his story wouldn't hold, few had trouble accepting the truth. "We've all understood for a long time that his moral code was not unimpeachable," said one aide. "We're not a bunch of starry-eyed loyalists. I come in here every day not necessarily because I'm proud of him as an individual but because I'm proud to work for his administration."

About an hour after the president's speech, I hitched a ride home with one of the White House scandalmen. He seemed oddly liberated, finally able to talk. Like others, the aide felt let down—"I'm pretty hard-core about lying"—and he mourned all the wasted time. "You wonder where we might have been had all this not happened," he said. But perhaps the most revealing aspect of his reaction was that he couldn't muster any strong feelings. "To some extent, maybe I'm numbed to emotion," he said.

This, then, is what Bimbroglio has left us: a prosecutor who can't exercise discretion, a president who can't show real contrition, a press corps that can't forgive, and a White House aide so shell-shocked he can't feel anything at all. •

Another Clinton scandal.

UNSCOMSCAM

By Martin Peretz

Madeleine Albright denies the devastating August 14 *Washington Post* story by Barton Gellman. The article explains how she squelched two surprise United Nations weapons inspections on Iraqi sites that intelligence authorities had determined contained incriminating evidence of forbidden chemical, biological, and ballistic missile arms. Of course, concealing important truths is one of Albright's lifetime habits. But her carefully parsed denials, like those of her boss on other matters, are believed neither by careful observers of U.S. foreign policy nor by the general public. Indeed, it is hard to imagine even she really believes the wider implication of her disclaimer, which is that the administration has not backed down from its commitment to visit the "severest consequences" on Iraq if it impedes the inspections regime mandated by the U.N. in March—a regime which is itself a pale, weak version of the enforcement arrangements to which Iraq submitted after the Gulf war.

And the very terms of Albright's disavowal signaled squishiness: "There will be no sanctions relief if we can't have inspections going on." After all, the point of

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sanctions was to maintain them until inspections had proven, beyond a reasonable doubt, that Iraq was no longer in the unconventional weapons business . . . and not before. Only months ago a U.S. spokesman had warned Baghdad of our intended response to any violation by Saddam Hussein of the agreement his government had made with Kofi Annan: a "snap back" policy of decisive armed force. There was to be no "carrot" simply for allowing the inspections; rewards depended on what the inspectors did—or, more precisely, did not—find.

Not surprisingly, there have been many such violations by Iraq. And, just as predictably, there has been no snap-back response—or any other practical response, for that matter. Indeed, the United States has consistently and conspicuously averted its eyes, passing the buck to the U.N., where three of the Security Council's veto-possessing members shill for the killer-tyrant. Still, it was stunning to learn that this policy reversal actually included Albright's direct interventions against the inspection teams' specific plans. The secretary of state was actually micromanaging a policy she wanted to throttle. If anything calls for congressional hearings, certainly this is it. The hard information about all this was leaked to the press and to other concerned experts from none other than demoralized U.N. personnel. And one needs no leakers to know that it was the government for which the secretary works that cut the deterrent presence of the U.S. military in the region by just about half. No wonder Saddam was encouraged to do important mischief.

A second eye-popping article, by Judith Miller and James Risen of *The New York Times*, reported on the 1994 defection to the United States of a top Iraqi nuclear physicist—a defection that brought more grim tidings for the administration. Dr. Khidhir Abdul Abas Hamza was chief planner for Baghdad's ambitious nuclear weapons program, and the picture he paints of Iraq's scientific culture is simply ghoulish, a mixture of high technology and primitive cruelty. Iraqi officials routinely employ torture as a motivator—that is, when they're not using murder. And it works: As early as 1991, Hamza says, Iraq was mere months away from having a working uranium bomb. Never fear. Like the Bush administration before it, the Clinton administration will wave away as alarmism any near-time projections of a functional Iraqi nuclear capability.

At least half of Hamza's own knowledge is four years old. Still, his facts mesh with the paralyzing obstacles Saddam created to thwart UNSCOM and the International Atomic Energy Agency monitoring operations, plus the routine cupidity of Western corporations manufacturing "dual use" technologies, providing good reason to think that reassuring estimates of when Iraq could have a bomb are just sop estimates.

This is of concern to every state in Iraq's neighborhood—even those, like Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, that tend culturally to extenuate danger. But one country that can never do that is Israel. That's why the Israeli air force took out the Osirak nuclear facility in 1981, the most successful instance in our time of arms control that wrested tools of mass death from barbarous regimes—an act for which even the Saudi princes, to say nothing of the Iranian mullahs, may still privately bless Menachem Begin.

It may yet fall to Israel to repeat this now admittedly more complicated feat, and not only in Iraq. The position and power of Iraq are critical to Israel's estimate of its own long-term security. When Israel and the surrounding states (with the PLO also there tucked into the Jordanian delegation as Arafat's punishment for having cheered for Baghdad) were summoned to Madrid in October 1991, it was with the glib assumption that Saddam Hussein had been at last tamed. Few then had weighed fully the consequences of the victory that did not vanquish. So Iraq was not widely seen as a salient actor in the ongoing drama. But that was before Bill Clinton demonstrated both his polemical outrage at, and functional indifference to, Iraq's various provocations, including Saddam's movement into Kurdish "safe havens" and the attempted assassination of George Bush.

Albright is readying for another confrontation with Israel in the next days. She wants a win somewhere, and it's easier to squeeze an ally than confront an adversary. Maybe Benjamin Netanyahu will give her the altogether arbitrary 13.1 percent of the West Bank she wants for the Palestinian Authority, with the last three percent of this under some form of more limited Palestinian control. But this will do nothing to advance a real peace process based on compromise and concessions from both sides. Yes, the Palestinians will make some reciprocal promises for what they get. But, when they fail to deliver on them, the secretary of state will not muster anything like the anger she has focused on Bibi. Albright is intent on pacifying Arafat, much as she is intent on pacifying Saddam.

The grim reality is, however, that no one will be able truly to pacify or to reconcile Arafat. He and his polity want what they cannot get, not from the present Israeli authorities, and not from the Labor opposition either. Israel does have a final line, drawn quite literally in the sand, beyond which it will not and dare not go. When it finally dawns on the Palestinians that no responsible Israeli government would allow descendants of Arab refugees and voluntary émigrés of 50 years ago to settle in the homes of their over-rich imaginations in Haifa and Jaffa, Ramle and Safed, or to give up anything near what the PLO has convinced its population it will get of the territories, or to divide sovereignty in Jerusalem, or to cede control of aquifers, we will find them holding what has already been achieved by way of self-government hostage to their grander ambitions. Riot is what is threatened, and riot is what is likely to happen.

And what has this to do with Saddam Hussein's Iraq? One day the ruler of Baghdad will try to have his troops

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sweep through Jordan. May King Hussein live, as the Jews say, until 120, and may he ward away evil from his land. But, if he can't, Israel would have to intervene immediately against Iraqi forces (just as Israel did when, in 1970, Syrian tanks headed south with aggressive aims against the monarchy). Iraq's troops will certainly try to reach the Jordan River if I am right about what is likely to happen in emergent Palestine, and they will attempt this even if I am wrong in my gloomy anticipations. Just maybe, in exchange for a more or less contiguous state, the official Palestinians will actually stop taking political hallucinogens. But this won't affect Saddam. Nothing Israel does will ever conciliate a man whose imperial pretensions are whetted by the sheer presence of a Jewish polity in the area. Were Israel even to retreat to a new city-state in Tel Aviv, this wouldn't be enough for the Tikriti mass murderer. And, truth to tell, it won't be enough for many Palestinians either. Ever.

One of the reasons Benjamin Netanyahu may seem so obdurate is that Saddam is still on the center stage from which we had every right to expect he would have long ago been removed. Saddam and the political culture of which he is an authentic expression constitute the wildest card in Middle East affairs. After the Gulf war, then-Secretary of State James Baker brooded about forcibly linking Israel's withdrawal from the West Bank to Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait, and it isn't as if he didn't try. This was illogical. Israel's conflict with the Palestinians had, and has, nothing to do with Baghdad's coveting another Arab country's oil fields. The linkage actually goes the other way. Israel has good reason to be anxious about Iraq. Already in 1991, Saddam targeted Israel with SCUD missiles, even though Jerusalem had been pointedly excluded from the military alliance Secretary Baker cobbled together for the Gulf war. Saddam makes no secret of his hatred for Israel and of his contempt for those Arabs who have, however reluctantly, come to tentative terms with the Jews. Courting all kinds of troubles, Baghdad does not invest so heavily in biological agents, chemical compounds, and nuclear functionality just to make a statement. The regime knows where it will direct whatever weaponry it possesses, and one of its targets surely is the people of Israel.

This is the salient linkage between how Iraq behaves and what Israel can and should do. It is ironic that Albright seems not to grasp what the administration's cosseting of Saddam Hussein means to the peace talks with which her own conceits have become so unprofessionally entangled. When this administration came to power, Iraq was in seriously reduced straits—and this despite the Bush administration's own stubbornly naïve concern for the territorial integrity of that country. Saddam's new aggressiveness is an index of how he measures American resolve, and he does not measure it highly. As a consequence, the Middle East is now a more dangerous place than it was eight years ago, a more unstable place. It is particularly insecure for Israel, powerful though it is. The territory it is being asked to hand over to the Palestinian Authority—empty desert territory, as it happens—is land from which it may have to mount a defense against Iraq, whose regime has the support of both Arafat and his opponents among the religious ultras, the support, that is, of virtually all the Palestinians. A rule of warfare: When their enemies are at the gate, there's trouble in the cities. Iraq on Israel's border? Unlikely, you say. I'm not so sure. In any case, the United States is not giving out guarantees. And, frankly, if it did I wouldn't trust them. •

TALLAHASSEE DISPATCH

SUNSHINE BLUES

By Tyler Bridges

After a white man confessed to the 1963 killing of two white gas-station attendants in Florida, the two black men originally convicted of the crime, Freddie Pitts and Wilbert Lee, got the governor to grant them a pardon. But, afterward, when Pitts and Lee went to the state legislature looking for financial restitution—they had spent twelve years in prison—they got nothing. Conservative Democratic lawmakers turned aside the requests because many of their North Florida constituents still believed that the men were guilty in what was a racially charged case. Then, this April, lawmakers did an about-face. They awarded the men $500,000 each. Why the change? Republicans now control the legislature.

The $1 million that the Republicans secured for Pitts and Lee was not an anomaly. It was, rather, the most visible result of an unlikely alliance that developed this year—and is currently holding steady—between the GOP and black Democrats in the Florida House. It is a marriage of convenience for both sides, but it is also evidence of the Democratic Party's weakness in Florida, a state it dominated until the 1990s. And, while black Democrats have not forged a similar alliance with Republicans in other Southern states, the developments in Florida underscore the challenge Democrats face throughout the South: appealing to both blacks and whites without alienating either group.

The immediate impetus for the new alliance was an episode involving state Representative Willie Logan, who since 1982 has represented the town of Opa-locka, just north of Miami. Logan, a tall, 41-year-old African American, was a loyal Democrat who had steadily advanced within the ranks. Last year, his colleagues elected him as their House speaker-designate. This meant that, following the November 1998 legislative

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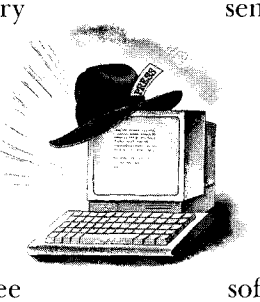
elections, Logan would become either the new House speaker or the Democrats' minority leader, depending on which party won control of the House. Logan was excited to be the speaker-designate because, even though it seemed likely that Republicans would maintain their majority, no black person had been speaker-designate since Reconstruction.

But, late in the afternoon of January 6, Logan received an e-mail informing him that a group of his colleagues planned to oust him in a special election the next day. When Logan asked why, they told him that he was not devoting enough time to his duties as speaker-designate—raising money and recruiting House candidates—because he was too busy getting a doctorate and traveling for his job as a business consultant. They also said Logan was too liberal.

The next day, when nearly all the white Democratic House members voted to replace Logan with a white woman, Logan and his 14 black colleagues walked out of the meeting in protest. "This was not a racial issue," one of the plotters, Representative Jack Tobin, insisted to *The Miami Herald*. "The concern was that Willie did not dedicate the time and resources necessary to become speaker." But Logan saw it differently. As he later told *The Washington Post*, "There were people who were worried that the Republicans were going to put my picture on fliers and pass them around saying, 'If you vote for a Democrat, this is going to be the next speaker of the House.'" Logan and most of his black colleagues immediately declared themselves "free agents" and called on their constituents to cease automatically supporting Democratic candidates. They also vowed to punish the 31 white House Democrats who voted to replace Logan.



Logan got his first chance for revenge in March. Representative Steve Geller, believed by Logan to be one of his chief adversaries, ran for an open seat in the Florida Senate representing Broward County (just north of Miami). Geller was a smart, aggressive veteran lawmaker, and the Senate district was overwhelmingly Democratic. Normally, Geller would have been a shoo-in. But Logan and U.S. Representative Alcee Hastings, an African American who represents Broward, targeted Geller for defeat. Hastings endorsed Geller's Republican opponent, Ellyn Bogdanoff, even though Hastings stated he didn't know her stance on most issues. "I'm trying to teach the Democratic Party that it should not take people for granted," said Hastings. "We're using this election as an object lesson." Logan, for his part, recorded radio ads supporting Bogdanoff. Geller won, but with only 56 percent of the vote. What especially caught everyone's attention was that Geller's narrowest margins were in Broward precincts where blacks comprised at least 80 percent of the registered voters.

Republicans in the Florida legislature were quick to exploit the rift. Having gained control of the House in 1996 for the first time in 122 years, Republican leaders were determined to hold it. They began meeting with Logan and other black lawmakers to see if they could find common ground. And, thanks to Florida's booming economy, the GOP leadership had the means to cut a deal: the Republicans would direct pork-barrel projects to the blacks' districts and cohost fund-raisers for black members to attract money from business lobbyists. The black members, in turn, would support Republicans on some high-profile issues.

Logan got $5 million to expand classroom space at a private, historically black college in his district; Representative Beryl Roberts-Burke got $500,000 to beautify a downtown area in her district. Other black lawmakers got money for roads, sewers, and city-hall restorations. In all, the GOP directed approximately $40 million in projects to black lawmakers' districts. In return, several black legislators spoke in favor of a bill banning "partial-birth" abortions that Governor Lawton Chiles and key Democrats opposed. Previously, the black officials had voted for the bill but had remained silent during the debate out of deference to their Democratic colleagues.

Roberts-Burke and another black lawmaker, Representative Cynthia Chestnut, also played a prime role in pushing a bill that would have created a pilot voucher program to allow kindergartners at troubled public schools to attend private ones. Jeb Bush, the GOP candidate for governor, supported the measure, which failed, while Lieutenant Governor Buddy MacKay, the Democratic candidate, opposed it. MacKay is planning to tag Bush as soft on public education because he favors the pilot voucher program. But the support of Roberts-Burke and Chestnut for the measure undercuts MacKay's plans to make this a major issue. (As her reward for pushing the bill, the Republican speaker named Chestnut vice chairman of a key budget-writing committee.)

Since the session ended, Chiles, MacKay, and other party leaders have tried to mend fences with Logan, Hastings, and the other black elected officials. On August 7, Vice President Gore—mindful of Florida's importance in the 2000 presidential race—flew to Fort Lauderdale. Three days later, Florida House Democrats elected Representative Les Miller, a black man, as their latest speaker-designate, the job Logan had held. But Logan and a majority of the other black caucus members did not support Miller, saying he had been too close to the whites who had ousted Logan. With Jeb Bush still calling Logan for advice on a weekly basis and campaigning hard for the black vote, Logan and perhaps one or two other black lawmakers might well endorse the former president's son. At the very least, it seems certain that Bush will win more than the five percent of the black vote he got in the 1994 governor's race when Chiles barely defeated him.

Can this unlikely alliance be duplicated in other Southern states? It's worth remembering that, within the past decade, David Duke was elected to the

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Louisiana House of Representatives as a Republican, North Carolina Senator Jesse Helms won reelection with a blatant racial appeal, and Republican legislators in South Carolina adamantly refused to take down the Confederate battle flag that flies over the state capitol. Governor Fob James just won the Republican primary in Alabama after criticizing his opponent for being endorsed by the black mayor of Birmingham. So Republicans are still successfully using the race card in Dixie.

Florida, however, is different—and some Republicans, at least, hope it will become a harbinger. As much as 50 percent of the people who will vote in this year's governor's race did not live in Florida ten years ago. Many of them came from Latin America, the Midwest, or the Northeast. With so many Latinos and non-Southerners in Florida, candidates running for statewide office lately have shied away from playing the race card. Jeb Bush, for example, has a nuanced view of affirmative action that is pretty close to President Clinton's. Bush opposes programs designed to create quotas or handouts but supports programs that create equal access to opportunity. So, without statewide Republican candidates in Florida pushing race-based issues, black Democrats in the state can, without too much discomfort, get in bed with the Republicans.

Of course, that doesn't mean the alliance can last. There's a reason that blacks have historically voted with Democrats: Democrats tend to espouse the views that the majority of blacks support. For now, it's cash—the cash that the Republicans can spend in the blacks' districts—that's holding the alliance together. And that money won't be there forever.

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A nice idea that won't work.

COURT OF DREAMS

By David Rieff

Among most of those who have been horrified by genocide in Rwanda, ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, and all the other crimes of war since the cold war, an ironclad consensus seems to have developed that an International Criminal Court is the best, and perhaps only, hope for bringing the architects of such horrors to account. Thus, while the court that was actually created by the treaty signed in Rome on July 17—a court with sharply circumscribed powers—did not meet its proponents' highest expectations, the fact of its creation is being hailed as a great victory for humanity. Even before the treaty's formal signing, Aryeh Neier, president of the Soros Foundation and its Open Society Institute and one of the animating spirits behind the creation of the court, declared: "For the first time in human history, those committing war crimes, crimes against humanity, or the ultimate crime, genocide, [will] have to reckon seriously with the possibility that they [will] be brought before the international bar to face truth, be held accountable, and serve justice." Neier and distinguished organizations such as Human Rights Watch and Doctors Without Borders argue that the court, whatever its limitations (above all, that it will not have jurisdiction over war crimes committed in internal armed conflicts by states that have not signed the treaty), is an invaluable first step toward what *Le Monde* called "the prevention of conflicts through judicial dissuasion."

Given the impressive experience and undeniable goodwill of the court's advocates, critics need to proceed with great caution. Nonetheless, it is anything but clear that the current enthusiasm for the ICC is warranted. Indeed, it may very well be the wrong answer to the moral and political challenges posed by the world of genocide and ethnic cleansing in which we find ourselves. Far from ushering in a new era of certain punishment for war criminals, it may prove to be an exemplary case of good intentions gone awry and lead to less respect for international law rather than more.

The first set of objections is practical. As designed by the treaty-drafters in Rome, the court is probably too weak to bring wrongdoers to justice. Indeed, since most of the greatest crimes committed in contemporary wars go on during internal conflicts outside the purview of the Rome treaty, it is not clear what abuses the court will actually address. It would not have had jurisdiction over Saddam Hussein's war against the Kurds, Pol Pot's reign of terror, or the Rwandan genocide of 1994—much less the slow extermination of the animist peoples currently taking place in southern Sudan.

To the extent that such horrors can be prevented, they will be stopped by the use of force by outside powers, which, in practical terms, usually means the United States. This brings us to the second pragmatic objection: The court is just strong enough to impinge upon the sovereignty of individual states and thus will further inflame isolationist and, above all, anti-multilateralist feeling in the United States—both in the U.S. military and in the general public.

Proponents of the court wager that the long-term benefits (they would say necessity) of taking this first step far outweigh the meager practical results that can be expected from the court as it is now constituted. But, after Bosnia and Rwanda, it may well be that more such idealistic initiatives are exactly what we don't need—that, in fact, initiatives should be judged by the actions they are likely to engender in the here and now—not by the better world they may, in some indeterminate future, help to usher in. In the absence of a world gov-

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ernment, or of a United Nations army, such strong action, of course, can only be undertaken by states. Utopianism can be a fine thing, but not if it is based on a misperception of the world as it actually exists. And that misperception seems to have bedazzled the decent people who have campaigned for the court.

The deeper argument that didn't quite take place before the Rome treaty was signed would have revolved around the relation of law and politics. Advocates of the court never really ask what law can honestly be expected to accomplish in what is still very much a lawless world, no matter how many nations have signed up for how many international covenants and conventions. People today rightly mock the 1928 Kellogg-Briand pact, which, among its other provisions, "outlawed" war. If the idea that the likes of Ratko Mladic will really be dissuaded by the existence of a court in The Hague is not equally preposterous, then surely the advocates of the court must meet the burden of proving that the world has changed in fundamental ways since 1928. The experience of the past 60 years should be enough to demonstrate that they can do no such thing. What was needed in the 1930s was not pacifism but a war against fascism. What will be needed to stop the next Bosnia or the next Rwanda will be force, not the prospect that, somewhere down the line, the criminals may find themselves indicted for war crimes. Imagining otherwise is like supposing that street thugs will decide not to commit a mugging or a rape because of the distant possibility they may go to jail.

There is something hubristic about the effort to graft a system of international law onto the tragedies of faraway peoples. I say faraway because, of course, none of the main nations backing the International Court, U.S. anxieties to the contrary notwithstanding, really imagines that its own citizens will ever stand in the dock. Would an international legal system have been the right response to the American Civil War, to use an obvious example, at least to those who believe Lincoln's war was a just one? And, if the answer is that Sherman's war crimes in Georgia (and that, by today's standards, is what they were) were of secondary importance to the need to break the will of the Confederacy, then why should the same defense not be available to the Rwandan Patriotic Front, which committed war crimes in a just war against its genocidal enemies?

It is as if the advocates of the court have all concluded that history is at an end, or at least that they can interrupt history's tragic march and replace it with international legal norms and the moral convictions of human rights activists, international lawyers, and humanitarian aid workers. Were there really such a thing as the international community, such assumptions might be warranted. But, as anyone who has been in a place like Rwanda—or watched how decisions are made at the U.N., NATO, or the European Union—knows, the international community does not exist. What exist, for better or worse, are tribes, peoples, nation states, and international alliances. It's rank wishful thinking to pretend otherwise.

Law proceeds out of civilizational change; it can never prefigure it. Nor can it be expected to do for the people of Rwanda, or Bosnia, or Sudan what they cannot do for themselves. Some, of course, argue that, in places where ordinary people can do nothing to resist their oppressors, only some form of protectorate imposed by a supranational organization like the U.N. can help them. This may be so. Certainly, it is difficult to imagine a place like Cambodia recovering without some period of benign external rule. But so long as world government, or, for that matter, the more modest goal of U.N. protectorates in so-called failed states, is not in the offing, instituting an International Criminal Court amounts to trying to construct an international legal structure for an international political structure that does not yet exist.

The view of the civilizing process as a top-down one, imperial in nature, may be effective in certain contexts. But, in the case of a court with, literally, global reach, it is one that fundamentally evades the question of the court's legitimacy. The presumption is of a consensus that does not exist. (Even the judicial norms the court will use will have to be cobbled out of various legal systems whose assumptions are, in crucial ways, very different from one another.) But laws work when legal bodies are deemed legitimate by those over whom they have authority. If the civil rights movement was successful in the United States, this was in large measure because most American citizens, including those in the South, accepted that the decisions of American courts were binding, whatever their private feelings. And even then troops had to be sent to certain places to enforce the law.

Advocates of the court will argue that to oppose the court is to surrender to despair. Leaving aside the fact that there are times when it is right and proper to despair, the issue is not one of forswearing hope for a better world. It is one of not fostering false, illusory hope. To some extent, even the court's strongest proponents know this. Aryeh Neier in the preface to his new book, *War Crimes*, concludes that "the heart says civilized men and women with respect for the rule of law cannot permit [crimes like those that occurred in Bosnia] to happen again. The mind, sadly, sends a different message." Knowing this, Neier still believes in the court. Others may wonder if, in doing so, he is not letting his heart get the better of his head—if he is not trying to do something, anything, rather than sit idly by and watch the next Karadzic, the next Interhamwe militia, start a murderous assault.

In reality, it is the court that is the counsel of despair. Its real rationale derives from the hope that, somehow, the law can rescue us from situations from which politics and statecraft have failed to deliver us. But the law can never do this, and this time will be no exception. With the best intentions in the world, we are creating one more institution that, like the United Nations itself, is sure to be unable to meet the high hopes that attended its creation and is bound to create, as the U.N. itself has done, not hope but disillusion. •

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BOSTON DISPATCH

HANGING BARNICLE

By Dan Kennedy

Now that *Boston Globe* columnist Mike Barnicle is really gone, it remains to be seen whether his media buddies will rally behind him as they did two weeks ago—when his plagiarism of one-liners from George Carlin's best-seller, *Brain Droppings*, first prompted *Globe* editor Matthew Storin to demand Barnicle's resignation. Initially, when *The Boston Herald* exposed Barnicle, he told his superiors that he'd gotten the jokes from a friend and that he had no idea his friend had stolen them from Carlin—an excuse that seemed plausible enough until Barnicle's other employer, WCVB-TV, broadcast a two-month-old segment from its program "Chronicle," in which Barnicle was seen holding a copy of *Brain Droppings* and promising that it contained "a yuck on every page." Storin and *Globe* publisher Benjamin Taylor called on Barnicle to resign—which seemed fair enough—but then the defiant columnist launched a massive public relations offensive that brought Don Imus, Larry King, Tim Russert, Richard Cohen, Marvin Kalb, and Mary McGrory to his defense. Incredibly, Storin and Taylor backed down, reducing Barnicle's sentence to a two-month suspension that was supposed to end, quite conveniently, just in time for the fall election campaign.

At the time, Barnicle's defenders insisted they were standing up against the forces of political correctness. Getting rid of Barnicle, they argued, was merely the *Globe*'s way of making up for ousting Patricia Smith—the black columnist who resigned in June after admitting she'd created fictitious characters in at least four of her columns. Of course, Barnicle had been dogged by claims of fabrication and shoddy journalism for years. But a review of 364 Barnicle articles going back to January 1996, which Storin ordered in the wake of Smith's resignation, had pronounced Barnicle pure. So, if all Barnicle did wrong was lift a few jokes from George Carlin, well, that was hardly reason to dismiss a columnist of such legendary repute—or so the argument went.

The chief promoter of this theory, not surprisingly, was Barnicle himself. And, when the *Globe* caved, his contrition was something less than contrite. At a news conference in the *Globe*'s fortress-like offices, Barnicle duly apologized for what he called "the intellectual laziness" and "sloppiness" of stealing Carlin's lines. But, when a reporter from *Boston* magazine attempted to press him about allegations of past improprieties, Barnicle snapped that he wouldn't respond to "a hotel guide." Shortly thereafter, a relaxed-looking Barnicle was in front of the building, answering friendly questions from a WCVB reporter, while the *Boston* writer was reduced to watching a monitor inside the television van.

Unfortunately for Barnicle, more revelations were on the way. And, with new allegations of wrongdoing—among them the lifting of work by A.J. Liebling, which I reported in my newspaper, *The Boston Phoenix*—suddenly hanging over his head, Barnicle finally relented. On August 19 he announced he was resigning after all, although that may not quite be the end of the matter—or of Barnicle. As of press time, WCVB maintained it planned to keep Barnicle as a regular contributor.

Surely, at least some people will continue to see the Barnicle controversy as some kind of parable about political correctness. But, in a sense, this debate about whether Barnicle was sacrificed in the name of racial symbolism—or whether his backroom connections allowed him to cheat the executioner for as long as he did—misses the real lesson here. Like so many other major newspapers, the *Globe*—by far New England's largest and most influential news organization—has been trying for the last three decades to overcome its well-earned reputation for having an elitist, out-of-touch orientation toward the city and region it serves. Barnicle, a tough-talking Irish-American with working-class roots, and Smith, an African American with a poet's voice and a controversialist's heart, were grafted onto this culture in an attempt to broaden the *Globe*'s base—to reach out to the disparate and distrusting ethnic clans that Boston comprises. Call it tokenism as journalism, or call it a quota system run amok. Either way, it was a substitute for what the *Globe* really needed—that is, a staff of city reporters more in tune with the city—and it didn't work very well.

Historically, the *Globe*, founded in 1872, was the voice not of Boston's Brahmin classes but rather of the city's dominant Irish community. But, by the mid-1960s, with most of the city's other papers having vanished, the genially complacent *Globe* had won the upscale readership by default. The paper was owned by Yankees—the Taylor family—and edited by a Yankee—Tom Winship, son of the previous editor, who set about the difficult task of turning the *Globe* into one of the best regional papers in the country. Winship imported talent from Harvard and from Boston College, the Irish-Catholic Harvard. And he largely succeeded. Under Winship, the *Globe* won a slew of Pulitzers. The paper offered superb investigative reporting, outstanding coverage of national and state politics, and more and better foreign-news coverage than readers of a regional newspaper had a right to expect. Not to mention a world-class sports section.

But, when it came to covering the city whose name adorned its masthead, the *Globe* was curiously lackluster. The *Globe*, then and now, is a paper whose publisher and editor live in the affluent, overwhelmingly white suburbs—along with much of the reporting staff—where they are primarily exposed to well-educated, well-meaning folks much like themselves. Which explains

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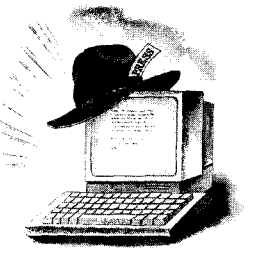
why they were so shocked when white working-class neighborhoods such as South Boston and Charlestown exploded in fury at the *Globe* in the school desegregation crisis of the mid-1970s. As vividly recounted in the late J. Anthony Lukas's 1985 book *Common Ground*, the *Globe* was literally under siege, in danger of being attacked by white mobs and/or terrorists who were enraged by the *Globe*'s pro-busing stance.

Enter Barnicle, a working-class kid from nearby Fitchburg who had managed to talk his way into a prominent position on Robert Kennedy's 1968 presidential campaign, and who had later befriended Robert Redford and helped write the screenplay for *The Candidate*. Barnicle, who'd joined the *Globe* as a columnist in 1973, was invaluable during the busing crisis. Not only was he one of the few members of the *Globe*'s staff who had any street savvy, but he was the only voice in the paper with the sense and the guts to criticize white suburban liberals for imposing unworkable social-engineering schemes on the urban poor of all races.

But, from the outset, Barnicle was just as contemptuous of journalistic professionalism as he was of the *Globe*'s upper-middle-class sensibility. One of his very first columns quoted the white owner of a gas station in predominantly black Mattapan calling his neighbors "niggers." The gas-station owner denied using the epithet, sued Barnicle, and won a $40,000 judgment. It was just the first in what has been a 25-year career of staggering from one professional misadventure to another. He's been accused of lifting material by the late Chicago columnist Mike Royko. In 1990, he wrote that Harvard Law School professor Alan Dershowitz had once told him he loved Asian women because "they're so submissive." Dershowitz objected, and the *Globe* ultimately paid a $75,000 settlement, a fact revealed just recently by *The New York Times* and *Brill's Content*. In 1991, *Boston* magazine, in a series of solid, well-researched articles, strongly suggested that Barnicle had made up characters and quotes, the very offense that cost Patricia Smith her job. Barnicle denied it but never publicly offered any proof to the contrary.



It's because of those problems, not because of the George Carlin column, that Barnicle's critics originally charged that the *Globe* was guilty of a double standard in forcing out Smith but keeping Barnicle. And, taken as a whole, Barnicle's transgressions would indeed appear to equal Smith's. The critical difference was in how the two could defend themselves. Smith's support mainly came from a few black leaders and the city's not-terribly-influential poetry community; Barnicle could call in 25 years' worth of chits from his influential friends in the worlds of politics, media, and business. He had powerful allies within the *Globe*—like political columnist David Nyhan, who shared pallbearing duties with Barnicle at Tip O'Neill's funeral several years ago—and among key *Globe* advertisers as well. When Storin first asked Barnicle to resign, Thomas Stemberg, the chief executive of Staples office supply stores, sent the *Globe* a letter fretting about what Barnicle's dismissal would do to circulation.

Connoisseurs of hypocrisy took vicious delight as they watched the *Globe*, a leading exporter of boutique liberalism and diversity-babble, prostrate itself before the old-boy network. Within the *Globe*, many writers and editors made the same observation—if rarely with the same bemusement. More than 50 reporters and editors, a number of them white, signed a letter protesting the unequal treatment given to Barnicle and Smith. More ominously, *New York Times* editorial page editor Howell Raines wrote a blistering commentary in which he charged that "a white guy with the right connections got pardoned for offenses that would have taken down a minority or female journalist." (Since the New York Times Company owns the *Globe*, many wondered if Raines's column was simply his opinion or a message from the management.)

The real question, though, is not why Barnicle and Smith got unequal treatment—but why both didn't get fired long ago. And the blame for this belongs with *Globe* management—specifically, with the Taylor family and with Storin's predecessors, for slapping Barnicle lightly on the wrist time and again, and with Storin, for promoting Smith to a columnist's slot in 1994 despite past questions about her ethics and for meting out nothing more serious than a warning after some of her early columns came under suspicion. Indeed, the *Globe* recently announced that as many as 52 of her columns may have been faked. In ethnically divided Boston, there are good reasons to have highly visible African American and Irish-American columnists. But, by deliberately filling two of its most prominent columnists' slots with writers who were ethnic warriors first and journalists second, the *Globe* invited the disaster that has befallen it.

As the *Globe* seeks to regain the trust of its readers, it ought to consider the lesson of one of Storin's smartest moves: his naming of Eileen McNamara to a columnist's slot in 1995. McNamara, a first-rate reporter who'd come up through the ranks, had quit the paper in a huff several years earlier. Storin, despite a strained relationship with her, worked assiduously to bring her back. As a stylist, McNamara is no Patricia Smith or Mike Barnicle. Yet her carefully reported columns, engaged and passionate and filled with righteous indignation, won a Pulitzer Prize in 1997.

McNamara, in other words, is the real thing. Barnicle and Smith were gaudy wallpaper, hung to cover over the structural flaws that lay underneath. The talk of Boston now is whether those flaws can be patched over again—or if new leadership will be brought in to undertake some major renovations.

DAN KENNEDY is the media critic of *The Boston Phoenix*.

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The value of devaluation.

A PILE OF RUBLE

By James S. Henry and Marshall Pomer

The world economy has yet another "submerging market" crisis on its hands, only this time in a country with 6,000 nuclear weapons. Thanks to a multitude of factors—a major liquidity crisis among Russian banks, 200 percent interest rates, the failure of the weekly government debt auction, a debt downgrade by both Moody's and Standard & Poor's, a gloomy forecast by George Soros, the Duma's postponement of a session on tax reform, and aftershocks from Asia—the Russian stock market hit its lowest point since the "Red election" scare of March 1996, 90 percent below its level a year earlier. One month after a hasty International Monetary Fund bailout, the government was broke again.

So, on Monday morning, August 17, Russia announced that the ruble was free to fall, sanctioning a devaluation of 34 percent. In addition, Russia in effect declared bankruptcy. Circumventing the IMF, it unilaterally suspended payment on short-term government debt. It also imposed a moratorium on debt payments by banks and corporations to foreign corporations. According to Western fund managers, the defaulted foreign obligations include as much as $100 billion in foreign contracts under which Russian banks obligated themselves to convert rubles into dollars at the previous exchange rate.

The financial stabilization, for the sake of which the real economy has been sacrificed, has turned out to be a mirage. The risk now is that the Russian people will stampede, pulling their deposits out of banks and converting their rubles to whatever dollars and other hard currency they can find. This would spell an unlimited fall of the exchange rate and very high inflation.

This is a country where $200 billion of private capital has already disappeared into offshore havens, and most other finance capital is invested in $100 bills or short-term securities. Furthermore, after seven years of Western-designed reforms, Russia remains mired in economic stagnation, without the institutional base or competitive strategy required for a viable market economy. Indeed, bailouts have only postponed the pain while financing hundreds of billions in capital flight by Russia's immensely rich, virtually untaxed elite.

How did Russia, one of the world's richest countries in terms of natural resources, skills, and technology, end up in such trouble? Before the July bailout, the overwhelming consensus among experts was that there was nothing fundamentally wrong with the anti-inflation strategy Yeltsin had pursued since 1992. This strategy has had three key elements—cutting spending, increased tax collection, and privatization; maintaining the real exchange rate; and throwing the doors wide open to foreign trade and capital flows. But, while the July crisis should have prompted a reassessment of these policies, most officials, bankers, and Wall Street professionals reacted by blaming the crises on extenuating circumstances like falling oil prices, Asia's turmoil, or the Duma. They also persuaded themselves that yet another bailout was preferable to devaluation. After all, it was not their money, and, hey, maybe this time around Russia really would be serious about fixing tax collection, wage arrears, shareholder rights, and corruption. The U.S. Treasury's Lawrence Summers and David Lipton, and the State Department's Strobe Talbott, wholeheartedly agreed.

In hindsight, we should have asked tougher questions before going along. After all, many of the so-called experts who favored the deal had vested interests. Foreign bankers had $75 billion of Russian loans outstanding. Private investors had $60 billion in the T-bill market. And Russians naturally liked buying foreign imports and dollars at subsidized exchange rates—while the party lasted.

Fortunately, more skeptical thinking has prevailed this time around. Russia has not hit its targets for deficit reduction *once* in seven years of IMF programs; there has been no discernible progress in its collection of vast unpaid taxes. In April 1993, the IMF predicted the economy would shrink 3.5 percent in 1994; it fell 12.6 percent. In 1995, it projected two percent real growth for 1996; it fell 2.8 percent. This May, as Russian markets were cratering, former IMF Managing Director Michel Camdessus told us: "This is not a crisis." Then, in July, to justify the last bailout, the IMF predicted that the deficit would be halved by 1999, relative to GDP; that the growth rate would double despite the current mess; and that Russia could borrow $20 billion more from domestic investors this year—predictions that were as unrealistic as all the others.

So, as of last week, policymakers really had no idea whether another bailout would be the last; all they knew was that Russia's crisis was reflecting more than exogenous forces. The "hold the ruble at any price" policy was the cul-de-sac of a long series of neoliberal experiments that Russia had run at the behest of Western advisers and the IMF. These experiments—heavily subsidized by the West—have played a key role in making Russia more prone to crisis by undermining its tax base, its manufacturing and technology sectors, as well as the incentives that Russians have to save and invest in real assets at home. The strategy has made Russia too dependent on exports of natural resources, Western imports, and "flighty" short-term Western capital—while encouraging private capital to seek refuge outside the country or under the mattress, where it is unavailable for development.

Among the worst examples of such experiments is the

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brutal shock therapy of 1992, designed by Harvard's Jeffrey Sachs, which triggered hyperinflation that cost the Russian people more than $130 billion in savings—even as Russia was solemnly assuming $85 billion of old Soviet foreign debt. Then there were the voucher privatization and "loans for shares" schemes of 1993–95, designed by Anatoly Chubais and Sachs's protege Maxim Boycko and implemented with some $300 million of U.S. foreign aid. They resulted in the sale of 70 percent of state enterprises to the new elite for less than $12 billion. Even Hungary raised more from privatization; Russia's elite, meanwhile, promptly moved more assets offshore.

Especially since 1995, the government has pursued a ruthless "forced lending" policy of not paying workers and pensioners on time. This was intended to satisfy the IMF's budget-cut targets; it's easier to stiff workers and pensioners than to collect taxes from the wealthy and well-connected. By the end of 1997, a quarter of workers had not been paid in at least six months—the government had $10 billion in unmet wage obligations, it owed another $12 billion in back pensions, and it had yet to collect some $21 billion in back taxes.

Together, these policies have decimated Russia's economy. Unlike East Asia, which experienced sustained growth before its recent troubles, Russia has been in a 1930s-style depression since 1991. While its "shadow economy" makes all such estimates uncertain, most observers agree that real GDP has fallen by 40 to 50 percent since 1990, and investment by 80 percent. From April 1997 to April 1998—in just one year—real cash incomes per capita fell 8.1 percent.

The strong ruble policy has also eroded the tax base by encouraging capital flight. The fact that the ruble has recently been overvalued has provided a strong stimulus for investors to buy artificially cheap dollars, speculating against a devaluation. The opportunity to evade taxes and conceal illicit income and the enrichment opportunities provided by Russia's privatizations have made the country the world's hottest "flight" market. The stock of Russian flight capital assets is now worth at least $200 billion, compared with Russia's foreign debt of $148 billion. Most of this flight money has landed in havens like Cyprus, Lebanon, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom, with the laundering arrangements made by prominent German, Swiss, U.S., and U.K. banks.

Russia's strongest growth sectors are speculative banking, money laundering, arms, raw materials, and energy. The oil-and-gas industry alone now accounts for more than 50 percent of legal exports. Science and technology have been gutted. Spending on research and development has dropped to half a percent of national income. The domestic economy is starved for capital. But most foreign investment has been channeled into securities, not real assets: there is less U.S. direct investment in Russia today than there is in Hungary. Yes, world oil prices have dropped precipitously this year. But it is crucial to view Russia's vulnerability to this decline in this larger context—the country is now just another Third World raw material exporter.

Against this background it is easy to understand why Russia had to devalue. Adjusted for domestic inflation, in the last two years Russia's exchange rate had risen dramatically. Originally this policy had been pursued in the interests of grinding down inflation after shock therapy sent it into orbit. Inflation is now below seven percent. Yet Russia's Central Bank had committed itself to a policy of holding the ruble virtually steady. This required exorbitant interest rates. One might have hoped that the Yeltsin government itself would have come to recognize that a policy of borrowing billions more just to achieve even lower inflation and provide still-cheaper imports and capital flight did not serve Russia's long-term interests—much less the interests of ordinary Russians. However, at the end of the day, it was the dictates of the market, not economic analysis, that forced Yeltsin's hand.

The devaluation is likely to make Russia's manufactured goods more competitive internationally, which in turn should stem Russia's industrial decline. Indeed, successful transition economies like Poland and China have generally maintained undervalued exchange rates. By taking a preemptive devaluation now, Russia may hope to join their ranks.

Inflation will rise in the short run, and the devaluation will be unpopular among the urban elites that consume most imports—though those same elites also own most of the flight capital, which is now worth much more in rubles. Devaluation will also take a toll on Russia's 1,600 or more banks, which have borrowed heavily in dollars or engaged in currency swaps that commit them to providing future dollars—which will now be much more expensive. But there are far too many "pseudo-banks" in Russia at this point anyway. Seventy-five percent of private deposits are with a state-owned institution called Sverbank, and most private banks are not really "banks" at all, in the sense of providing intermediation between savings and real investment. Rather, they are pure speculators, mainly involved (in Thorstein Veblen's memorable phrase) in "clever chicanery or the thwarting thereof" in security markets.

It's unclear how Russian default and devaluation will affect financial markets around the world. But Russia is hardly responsible for the fact that many of these banks, investors, and institutions have also made foolish moves in other developing countries. And there is really no alternative—the West can't afford endless bailouts, and Russia is too strapped to play a linchpin role anyway. It has followed neoliberal prescriptions for years—and they haven't worked. The bankruptcy of Russia demonstrates the intellectual bankruptcy of the economic policy conducted over the last seven years. Hopefully, the devaluation will be the first step toward a real competitive strategy, reversal of capital flight, and export-led growth.

JAMES S. HENRY has written widely on the problems of debt and development in Third World countries. MARSHALL POMER, director of the Macroeconomic Policy Institute and American coordinator of the Economic Transition Group, is coeditor with Nobel Laureate Lawrence Klein of the forthcoming *Rebuilding Russia* (World Scientific).

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Deconstructing the impeachment point man.

THE TRUTH ABOUT DAVID SCHIPPERS

By David Grann

"His favorite food is spaghetti with bluegill fish."
—David Schippers Jr., the second oldest of David Schippers Sr.'s ten children

In Washington these days, there is one Golden Rule to following the sex scandal that has consumed the country for the last seven months: those who know the most say the least, while those who know the least say the most. Thus, at one end of the spectrum, there are people like Dee Dee Myers, President Clinton's former spokeswoman, who has appeared on television more than 60 times since January, proclaiming on one night that the latest evidence against the president is "not an indicator of an affair" or "perjury" and on another that "he didn't tell the truth" and must say "he's sorry." At the other end, there are individuals like David Schippers, the man behind the man in charge of leading any potential impeachment hearings on Capitol Hill, who has steadfastly shunned the Sunday talk shows (and the Monday talk shows and the Tuesday talk shows) and who will say publicly only that "I have nothing to say." Indeed, since arriving in the nation's capital four months ago, the stocky Chicago prosecutor, who once jailed the infamous mobster Sam Giancana, has remained so silent that few of his colleagues in Congress even recognize him.

Yet, now that Bill Clinton has testified before the grand jury and has told the American public about his "relationship ... that was not appropriate" with Monica Lewinsky, what Schippers eventually says about the scandal may be more important than what anyone else does. A devout Democrat, Schippers was hired in April as the Republican House Judiciary Committee's chief counsel—Chairman Henry Hyde's way of lending an air of impartiality to any proceedings. Working for Hyde, his longtime friend, Schippers has become the ultimate gatekeeper, the person who will pore over Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr's final report to Congress and determine if there is "substantial and credible" evidence to impeach the president. "He's the king of the Hill," said University of Virginia government professor Larry Sabato.

As such, Schippers's every move is being scrutinized. Democrats say they have already begun to sift through his past; so have investigative reporters. No matter that Schippers hasn't done or said anything yet. Like nature, newspapers and magazines, including this one, abhor a vacuum. Which means the media are already pursuing the story of how Schippers will rule on a report that hasn't even been submitted yet.

Last week, hoping to keep speculation about Schippers to a minimum while simultaneously promoting his judicious image, Republicans made Schippers available to a handful of reporters. And, on Tuesday morning, Schippers, surrounded by two press secretaries, sat with me for an interview in the committee conference room. "There are certain ground rules," Press Secretary Number One told me, before I flicked on my tape recorder. No hypothetical questions about the scandal. No questions about pending legal matters. As I nodded in agreement, Press Secretary Number Two opened a pad and began to take notes, as if drawing up a contract for me to sign at the end of the meeting. Should the conversation violate these conditions, Number One continued, he'd be forced to interrupt. "Otherwise," he said, "I'll just sit back here quietly, and everything is on the record."

I took out my list of questions. I'd spent the previous night trying to think of ways to evade the rules without appearing to do so, to glean the answer to the only question that really counted: Did Schippers think lying under oath about fellatio with a 21-year-old intern was grounds for impeachment? Instead, I asked why he voted for Bill Clinton over George Bush in 1992. "Because I'm a Democrat who votes for Democrats," he said. "I'm Irish. I'm from Cook County, Illinois. My cousin is chairman of the Democratic Party. The first person I ever met when I could talk was a [Democratic] precinct captain."

I studied Schippers as he spoke. He had silvery hair and a salt-and-pepper beard. His nose was thick and puggish, and he talked with a Chicago accent. I wrote each detail down in my notebook ("brown shoes," "gray suit"), sure of the larger import. Then I tried to nudge closer to the real issue. Had Schippers watched the "60 Minutes" interview with the Clintons about Gennifer Flowers? He shifted in his chair. At first, he wasn't sure. After some more prodding, he said that, either way, the alleged affair had no bearing on his vote. "It didn't even enter my thinking. It was a nonissue ... *at the time.*" I

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scribbled excitedly, certain I had extracted some sort of revelation. Would you vote for him again? I asked. I looked at Press Secretary Number Two, who seemed to be writing down as much as I was, then at Number One, who seemed on the verge of interrupting. "Would I vote for him again?" Schippers mused aloud. I held my breath. "I . . . I can't answer that," he finally said, with a sigh. "That goes to my personal preferences."

And so it went for 40 minutes.

Over the course of that time, we talked about Gary Hart's sexual affair ("he threw the gauntlet down [to the press] and got whacked"); about Schippers's five years of studying for the priesthood before he married and had ten children ("better to be a good layman than a bad priest"); about his son, whom he hired to help probe Starr's final report (there's "no one more capable"); and about his vision of the law and morality ("there should be a moral overtone to every profession"). And then, before I could circle back, before I could elicit his views on Bill and Hillary and Monica, our time was up.

As I stood reluctantly, Schippers extended a bowl of chocolate chip cookies. "They're good," he said.

It is at points like this that journalists covering the White House scandal become Kremlinologists, searching for something that might mean anything: favorite sayings, for example, or even facial tics. Based on my interview and the Nexis database, this is the dossier I constructed about David P. Schippers: 68 years old, firm handshake, ten children, 25 grandchildren, a Daley Democrat, a knight of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulcher, likes gumballs, plants petunias, listens to old Frank Sinatra albums, earns $85,000 per year, wears the pin of a small cross on his lapel, defended a porn star named Seka and a serial killer who chopped up a teenager, donated $500 in 1987 to then-Senator Paul Simon of Illinois, and voted for Clinton twice. This last fact suggested two things: he will either be generous to Clinton because he is a partisan, or he will go out of his way to be harsh to Clinton because he doesn't want to appear partisan.

Uncertain which scenario might be more accurate, I began to call Schippers's friends and associates, people who had worked with him fighting organized crime for Bobby Kennedy's Justice Department or who remembered him from his days at Loyola University. They offered up the following scraps: During one case, he made up lurid stories about his staff to help his client talk about his own sex life. (Implication: He's open-minded about sex.) Another time, in the middle of a salacious case, he pulled out a Bible tucked in his pocket and prayed. (Implication: He's a prude.)

If these seemed contradictory, at least one case did not. According to a book about Schippers's most infamous client, the serial killer Larry Eyler, Schippers broke down and cried when he learned that the man whom he had presumed innocent and helped set free murdered and mutilated a young boy several months later. "Christ," he thought, "did I become a lawyer for this?"

In fact, by most accounts, Schippers was "honest," "devout," "bookish," and "faithful to his family and wife." Schippers's second son, David, said, "He could deal with it if we got caught smoking behind the school building, but not if we ever lied about it." Indeed, associates said that, when witnesses fudged the truth in court, Schippers nailed them—just as Starr did. To confirm this, I turned to, of all things, an HBO movie called *SugarTime*. Based on the "true story" of the infamous gangster Sam Giancana, it includes a 40-second scene in which Schippers (played by Michael Rhoades with a 1950s crew cut) holds Giancana in contempt for refusing to testify truthfully. As Giancana is carried off, screaming, "You call this justice!" Schippers looks on with a stoic smile. I played the scene over and over.

Yet it is Schippers's own words that seemed to shed the most light on his true character. "The rules are the rules are the rules," he'd said during our interview. "I'm not a moral relativist. That includes the law." And, after hours of splicing together the bits of information and hints of innuendo, I tried to predict what would happen if Clinton and Schippers were to come face-to-face in an impeachment proceeding. I made a chart with Clinton on one side and Schippers on the other.

CLINTON	SCHIPPERS
Liar	Honest
Adulterer	Devoted husband
Carries Bible before cameras on day before testimony	Carries a Bible in pocket every day
Drinks	Teetotaler
Legalistic	Moralistic

The case seemed closed. Clinton was dead, no matter what the polls showed or timid Republicans did. But, as I began to write my story, I noticed in my notes a curious fact: Schippers named one of his sons after his biggest hero, Sir Thomas More, the sixteenth-century English philosopher. I flipped through my notes again and found a passage Schippers had cited during our interview after I asked him if adultery was a venial or a mortal sin. Mortal, he conceded. But then he paused, as if about to impart some crucial clue about his willingness to prosecute others for their human frailty, and began to recount a scene from *A Man For All Seasons*—the famous play about More. Schippers noted how More's family, at one point, pleaded with him to arrest one of the king's wicked servants. "There is no law against that," More replied, of the servant's immorality.

"There is! God's law!" they argued.

"Then God can arrest him."

After Schippers concluded the story, he leaned back in his chair, as if all was suddenly clear, and said, "Amen." •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

From London to Louisiana

George Orwell's novel *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, published in 1936, now reaches the screen. (An aspidistra, I probably should explain, is a plant of surpassing homeliness that, potted and prominent, was—is?—a green badge of propriety in many English middle-class homes.) Retitled **A Merry War** (First Look), which is a phrase from the book, the film recounts the saga of Gordon Comstock, a young poet of the '30s. He quits his job in an advertising agency to consecrate himself to poetry. The publisher of his first slim volume finds Gordon some bookshop jobs to sustain him, but eventually Gordon returns to the ad agency and to stratified respectability because, having made his girlfriend pregnant, he must marry and support her.

Why this Orwell novel now? Well, it's comic about a pertinent perennial theme. Toward the end, after his two-year flight from convention, Gordon reflects: "Everyone rebels against the money-code, and everyone sooner or later surrenders." That idea is still a consolation for many, although it's no more true now than it was then: everyone does not rebel, and not everyone who rebels surrenders. Gordon himself might not have gone back into harness if he had had a condom on a certain afternoon. Still, the novel and the film remind us that doubts about the Bitch Goddess, which seem so ultra-mod, are not.

Apart from its theme—which is rather like saying "Aside from that, Mrs. Lincoln, how did you like the play?"—*A Merry War* has the trim, mortised shape of an Ealing comedy. Orwell's novel exudes something of the feeling of an H.G. Wells novel (he once wrote an essay on Wells), and Wells inherited from Dickens. The screen adaptation by Alan Plater understands the legacy. Plater is a playwright who was not quite of the Osborne generation and who was not quite as "angry," but was prolific for a time. His Orwell adaptation affirms belief in the very making of the film, with spirit and relish.

A good part of the picture's entertainment comes from the fact that Plater provided good acting parts, large and small, and the director, Robert Bierman, cast them shrewdly. Richard E. Grant, a master of tirade, cuts loose with Gordon's angers and with Gordon's belief in cutting loose—Grant scintillates. Julian Wadham is Mayfair-perfect as his rich dilettante publisher. Helena Bonham Carter has certainly been made up and photographed more attractively in the past, but she has the right terrier friskiness as the girlfriend. And every tiny part—a sniffy bank clerk, a frowsy landlady, a painfully posh waiter, etc.—is cast with a fine actor consenting to play a bit.

Jesse Peretz, who has made music videos and numerous shorts, has done his first feature, and I can't see why I should ignore his talent just because his father is the editor-in-chief of this magazine. **First Love, Last Rites** (Strand) is based on a story by Ian McEwan, transposed to America by Peretz and David Ryan, then made into a screenplay by Ryan. It hasn't precisely been dramatized: the point of the film is to capture an atmosphere rather than to build a drama. We are invited to spend some time with two late-teenagers who are in love.

The place is Louisiana bayou country. Joey is from Brooklyn, Sissel is a native; they are living together in a small house. Her divorced parents live nearby, his family is briefly mentioned. How Joey got down there, how the two met—none of this is explained. We are simply given the two lovers, already involved.

Sissel gets a job in a sugar mill, suddenly, almost whimsically. Joey, at the suggestion of Sissel's father, builds eel traps and tries to sell eels to the local Chinese restaurant. The two lovers play records. They make love. And so on. That's the film's texture. Braided throughout are some glimpses of a recurrent nightmare of Joey's, caused by a mouse in the wall of their house. When it emerges, it is actually a rat—which Joey kills. This element, a touch heavily symbolic, signals that the amorous idyll cannot last forever.

Out of these slender materials, apparently selected just because they are slender, Peretz has made a scented, languorous film. He wants us figuratively to nestle with Joey and Sissel in their generally messy bed, to pad around their place with them, to share a time that is free of any purpose other than to exist. Peretz articulates his design subtly. Few scenes build to a climax: they do what they have to do, then quit, and Peretz shapes them further by fading to a moment of black. Thus scene after scene replicates the overall shape of the picture, which is

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Out of Sight. *A cynical, witty, sexy comedy-drama, about a bank robber (George Clooney) and an FBI agent (Jennifer Lopez). Neatly turned. (Reviewed 8/3/98)* **Saving Private Ryan.** *Steven Spielberg's World War II epic thins out as it goes, becoming merely a well-done war movie. But the opening sequence—D-Day—is a huge masterpiece in itself. (8/17&24/98)* **The Thief.** *Excellently made Russian comedy-drama about a smooth crook, the woman besotted with him, and her son. Underneath the smooth plot is a grim political allegory. (8/10/98)* **Your Friends and Neighbors.** *Neil LaBute's cool look at contemporary sexual coolness. Perceptive, pitiless. (8/31/98)*—**SK**

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there to *be*, not to thrill and tingle.

Yet, with Tom Richmond, his gifted cinematographer, Peretz suffuses scenes with mood. One day Sissel and Joey are in bed; she is reclining, he is sitting at her feet. They talk idly. The sequence is continuous, without a cut: the camera simply glides slowly from one to the other and back again, our very view of the scene enhancing its lazy sensuality.

Another instance: when we first meet Sissel's father, Henry, he and Joey are in waders, walking through a swamp. Henry carries a gun: they are looking for birds. The scene, Peretz and Richmond tell us, is seemingly serene, but Henry is just getting used to the idea that Joey is sleeping with his daughter. When Henry shoots a bird (and Joey remarks that it's a loud gun), it's almost as if he is sublimating his unease. The tranquil surface of the water adds to the implicit tension.

Henry is played by Robert John Burke, familiar from Hal Hartley films, who gives the man hard-bitten, quasi-humorous acceptances. Sissel is Natasha Gregson Wagner, daughter of the still-lamented Natalie Wood, who is able to "act" run-of-the-mill. Giovanni Ribisi is just the other side of the balance point: he *is* run-of-the-mill. In a sense, we have to add a bit to his performance, have to imagine the slight increase in personality that would make Ribisi's performance the dawning of experience in Joey's life that it is meant to be.

It took considerable courage for a first-time director to choose such an unsplashy subject. Peretz made good on the choice. It seems quite possible that *First Love, Last Rites* will some day have additional interest as the beginning of a fruitful career. •

Robert Brustein on Theater

Pastoral Shakespeare

Summer Shakespeare has always been a joy because summer is a season that belongs to Shakespeare. No other dramatist has imagined so vividly the bracing pleasures of life in the woods. A country boy himself, he gave his own name to a rustic in *As You Like It* and his mother's name to the Forest of Arden. The allure of that Arcadian world, where the banished Duke Senior finds "tongues in trees" and "sermons in stones," not to mention the magical properties of Titania's fairy kingdom, the coastal beauties of Duke Orsino's Illyria, the bumptious rusticity of Polixenes's Bohemia, and other such bucolic sites, provide a storehouse of images that remain an indelible source of comfort through the long winter months. Two recent summer Shakespeare productions lovingly capture those recreational images—not just through verbal metaphors but through the splendors of their physical design.

Nicholas Hytner's version of **Twelfth Night** at the Vivian Beaumont is distinguished by another exquisite setting from Bob Crowley, an Irish scenic artist who is finally receiving the recognition here he has long deserved. Crowley's last assignment with Hytner was *Carousel*, a musical the designer turned into a dazzling retrospective of early twentieth-century American art. Enhanced by Catherine Zuber's costumes, Crowley's *Twelfth Night* is set in an exotic court out of *The Arabian Nights*, bounded by circular wharves stretching out to a distant sea. Even before the lights come up, Orsino (Paul Rudd)—a bare-chested, long-haired Eastern potentate—is lolling languorously near a bathing pool in a drug-induced torpor, listening to Jeanine Tesori's Oriental melodies being played on bongos and gamelans. Drowsy, languid, overfed on the food of love (music), this Orsino is almost always in the company of musicians. Accompanied by three sailors, Viola (Helen Hunt) enters from far upstage, in a sea-green gown, wading through shimmering water and mist. Accompanied by her ladies in waiting, the Countess Olivia (Kyra Sedgwick) enacts her grief in a large arbor under huge black umbrellas, moving in rhythm to a requiem.

In tune with contemporary fashion, the production is set in no consistent culture, place, or time. Sir Toby Belch (Brian Murray) and Sir Andrew Aguecheek (Max Wright) wear contemporary Western clothes, and, at one point, eat some Chinese takeout. The acid fool Feste (David Patrick Kelly) hops about in a green suit, an orange knitted cap, and sandals, and sings "Oh Mistress Mine" in the style of a soft rock ballad with electric guitar arpeggios. When Malvolio dons his yellow stockings, he attaches them to a pair of shorts.

The problem is that Hytner's inspiration seems to have stopped with the sets and costumes. Certainly, Brian Murray's Sir Toby and Max Wright's Aguecheek are an engaging pair of clowns. Looking and sounding like the old movie actor Cecil Kellaway, Murray plays that renegade sot with all the florid gestures of a classical ham. But his exploitation of Sir Andrew has a streak of mean cunning, suggestive of the way that, later, Iago will gull Roderigo. As for Max Wright, he makes another rich artistic gift to Lincoln Center, following his contribution last year as Lebedev in *Ivanov*. His voice quavering through his glottis like a constipated bellows, his body jerking through space like a mechanical toy, he becomes the very embodiment of craven idiocy, of false bravado. Terrified by Sebastian, he jumps into Orsino's pool and frantically backstrokes away. I also admired the way David Patrick Kelly managed to emphasize not so much Feste's amiable charm as his bitter foolery. He is largely motivated by a sour vindictiveness toward Malvolio ("And thus the whirligig of time brings in his revenges").

Alas, this gifted acting trio is not helped much either by Amy Hill's flat Maria (cast against type as a buxom Amazon), or by Philip Bosco's humorless Malvolio. I once described Bosco as an American actor who looked like Sir Michael Redgrave and sounded like Sir John Gielgud. Here he seems to be bucking for his own knighthood, giving an elocutionary performance that would not seem out of place at the Royal National Theatre. Bosco's Malvolio is pompous all right, but it's questionable whether that quality belongs more to the character or the actor.

Helen Hunt gives a clean, clear, cool interpretation of Viola. She reads the verse in a controlled, informal manner, and moves with considerable grace and poise. But her air of sangfroid would have been more appropriate in the role of Olivia. Hunt would certainly have given a better account of that proud, regal woman than Kyra Sedgwick, whose brassy, squeaky hyperactivity belongs in a sitcom. (Her charms become more vivid when, having jumped into the pool with Sebastian, she emerges with her dress clinging to her wet body.) Hytner has staged a fine recognition scene where the reunion of Viola and Sebastian rises in an emotional swell, and there are other good things in the evening. But the deeper issues of the play often seem to be scanted, especially the ambiguous sexuality of the relationship between Olivia and Viola. Most of the pleasures of this Lincoln Center *Twelfth Night* are absorbed through the eyes.

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Cymbeline is currently receiving its second staging in ten years by the New York Shakespeare Festival (Joanne Akalaitis last directed it as her farewell production at the Public Theater in 1989). Produced at the Delacorte as part of Shakespeare in Central Park, this version has been concocted by the Romanian stage and opera director Andrei Serban. Serban and I have done seven shows together and are now preparing an eighth for the coming season. Three members of the cast, moreover, have been members of my company. Michael Chybowkski, responsible for the lighting, is one of our resident designers. And my theater has sometimes collaborated with the composer, Elizabeth Swados. I mention these affiliations for the sake of those interested in potential conflicts of interest. I could, of course, elect not to write about the production. But since I believe it deserves a review, I will at least try to be more descriptive than prescriptive in my report.

The set designer, Mark Wendland, has set this tale of ancient Britain and ancient Rome on a verdant mound of grass. The area is decorated with four cypress trees and a circle of sand with a boulder in the middle resembling the altar of a Greek orchestra, the whole thing bounded by a body of water. Ten placards—white on one side (for Britain), red on the other (for Rome)—are employed to suggest changes of scene. What has functioned as a stage in the middle of Central Park, in other words, now seems to be an extension of the park itself, beautifully illuminated and ending at the feet of the audience. Thus we are invited as participants into Shakespeare's sylvan world, even grow complicit in his plot when Posthumus wanders through the audience raging against his supposedly adulterous wife.

Serban's other major innovation is to have the Roman gods, so often mentioned in the play, actually play a part in the action. In the text, Jupiter comes to earth at the end to serve as *deus ex machina*. In Serban's production, Jupiter, played by the menacing Liev Schreiber with a gait that has the suggestion of a goose step, is a fairly constant presence, both in his godly persona and in the person of the villainous character Iachimo. This doubling creates the sense that Iachimo's wager over seducing Imogen (he settles for cataloguing the items in her chamber, after wading hip deep to her watery bed) has either been part of another celestial sexual intervention, like Leda and the swan, or a heavenly pretext designed to test Posthumus. That Posthumus fails the test and is nevertheless forgiven only underlines and extends the theme of exoneration that is the leitmotif of Serban's concept. Even the ghosts of the Stepmother Queen and her nitwit son Cloten—more accurately, the ghost of Cloten's severed head—make a final appearance to join in the general benediction.

Clearly, Serban is exhuming the spiritual, mythic, and religious aspects of the play—buried under two hundred and fifty years of rationalism—rather than its qualities as a tragicomic romance or fairy tale. And these transcendent qualities are nowhere better embodied than in the Imogen of Stephanie Roth Haberle. Endowed with long black hair and piercing, deep-set eyes, the beauteous Mrs. Roth Haberle appears throughout most of the play clad in a white robe (designed by Marina Draghici) which largely disguises the fact that she is in an advanced state of pregnancy. Yet the hint of impending childbirth emphasizes the poignancy, and the danger, that follow her pursuit of Posthumus to Milford Haven. Seeing the headless body of Cloten and thinking him to be her husband, she cries "O! 'tis pregnant, pregnant," grabs her belly, and smears her cheeks with his blood.

That climax is followed by one of the most gripping moments in the production. Asked her identity by some Roman officers, she shrieks "I am nothing" with such a shuddering sense of loss that it seems as if we have entered the world of *King Lear*. (Later, walking through the water carrying a candle, she recalls Lady Macbeth.) Everything ends happily, of course, in a long dénouement staged with Arthurian stateliness as the British court congregates in long black hooded gowns. But in the meanwhile, we have accompanied the heroine on a perilous journey that has brought us to the edge of tragedy.

Strong qualities are also to be found in the performances of Herb Foster as Cymbeline, George Morfogen as the Storyteller, Hazelle Goodman as the wicked Stepmother, Robert Stanton as a pink-haired Cloten, Philip Goodwin as the sympathetic servant Pisanio, and, especially, Randall Duk Kim playing Belarius. As the adoptive father of the king's lost sons, Guiderius and Arviragus, Kim sustains a resolute center of loyalty and strength in the face of misfortune and misunderstanding, contributing considerably to the dynamism that drives the production.

Like *The Winter's Tale*—indeed like *Othello*—*Cymbeline* is about a woman falsely accused of adultery who is ultimately acquitted of the slander. The power and fury with which Leontes, Othello, and Posthumus generalize their indictments of female inconstancy sug-

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gest that Shakespeare himself may have felt a similar sting in his own marriage (it is a theme that runs throughout his work). But Shakespeare's daughter Judith was also officially charged with adultery, and his compassion for his wronged child may explain the prevailing atmosphere of forgiveness. At the very end of this production, when Imogen and Posthumus are reunited, when Iachimo is spared, when the Romans are freed from their chains, when an eagle rises over the stage and Jupiter appears in a brilliant gold gown backlit between the trees, we feel the characters being blessed with absolution. The theme of trial, misunderstanding, and reconciliation that pervades all of Shakespeare's last plays has found its resolution in the lap of nature warmed by summers in the sun. •

Freedom and Freedonia

By Tony Judt

Inventing Ruritania: The Imperialism of the Imagination by Vesna Goldsworthy

(Yale University Press, 254 pp., $30)

The Coasts of Bohemia: A Czech History by Derek Sayer

(Princeton University Press, 442 pp., $29.95)

I.

Eastern Europe is a complex place. From Shakespeare ("And what should I do in Illyria?") to Neville Chamberlain, Western commentators have found it remote, obscure, and troubling. Until recently, few have made the effort to visit it, to learn its languages, or to fathom its lands, its past, or its cultures. Until 1918, its distinctive parts were mostly invisible to outsiders and inaudible in international affairs, unless conjoined in diplomatic conversations under the heading of the "Eastern Question." In between the two world wars, the vulnerable little states between Germany and the Soviet Union were just one more unstable element in an unstable world. And after Hitler's defeat, the whole region became a part of the Soviet realm: as late as the 1980s, undergraduates reading politics at Oxford could study Eastern Europe only under the rubric "Soviet and East European Politics," and even then only in the context of a primary concentration upon the USSR itself.

As a result, not only is Eastern Europe complex, but Eastern Europeans have a complex about it. You cannot understand us, they chastise Western audiences. Your Western scholars have ignored us, and your Western leaders, when they have deigned to take us into account, have abandoned us. (Yalta, Munich, Sarajevo....) And, adding geographical insult to historical injury, you have the nerve to classify us as "Eastern" Europe when it is you who dwell on the periphery and we who are (or were, until you threw us to the wolves) Central Europe. We speak and read your languages, your poetry, your plays and novels. What do you know of ours?

Warsaw, say the Poles, is the "heart of Europe." Prague, observe the Czechs, lies west of Vienna and Stockholm and is a better showpiece for High European Baroque than any city of Italy or France. Budapest, affirm the Hungarians, has at least as good a claim as Vienna to be the capital of a recovered Central Europe (rather a better claim, actually). And Bucharest, Zagreb, Sarajevo, and Belgrade have all been variously proposed in recent years as intrinsically and quintessentially "European" cities, precisely because they stand guard at the frontier where European civilization encounters (and rebuffs) the barbarians to the east or south.

We know what it means to be European, they all insist, because our Europeanness has for so long been under threat. We have sacrificed and suffered so that Europe, your Europe, might live and thrive. Why aren't you listening? Why don't you see? Eastern Europeans have thrown down the gauntlet; and in recent years it has been picked up by a new generation of Western scholars and Western journalists. One reason for the increased interest, of course, has been the remarkable developments in the region, from the Prague Spring through Solidarity, Charter 77, and the revolutions of 1989 to the Third Balkan Wars. The contemporary history of the region is simply too dramatic to ignore. But there is another factor, and it is that a sea-change has occurred in scholarly tastes.

We used to study states, nations, classes. But for some time now, following a shift in fashion within the disciplines of anthropology and history especially, we study not the thing itself but the way it is represented—by the protagonists and by those who study them. Owing in large measure to the influence of the anthropologist Benedict Anderson, we investigate not nationalism but "imagined communities." And since the publication in 1983 of a seminal collection of essays edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, it is not tradition but "the invention of tradition" that preoccupies historians of modern popular culture and political spectacle.

Eastern (or "Central") Europe is a ready-made, heaven-sent playground for such notions. After all, the states of Eastern Europe either did not exist until recently, or else had to be reconstructed in the modern era following their obliteration by greater powers in earlier times. From a Western perspective (though not necessarily in the eyes of the locals), Czechs, Slovaks, Croats, and Bosnians—to cite only the best known—are all invented nations. Poland, Serbia, Ukraine, the Baltic states, even Greece, whatever the real or imagined glories of their distant past, have all been constituted and reconstituted out of lands and peoples whose history was once submerged in someone else's story. Eastern Europe, in short, has been both present and absent, real and unreal, depending on your perspective and your location.

Neither Anderson nor Hobsbawm and Ranger paid much attention to the region, but their approaches (or at least the titles of their books) have inspired a growing literature charting the ways in which the West has "imagined," "invented," or (borrowing from postmodern styles in literary criticism) "(mis)represented" its Eastern Other. At its best—say, in Larry Wolff's *Inventing Eastern Europe*, which appeared in 1994—the result has been an illuminating contribution to Western intellectual history, a fine excursion into uncharted waters that helps to map the ways in which Western European writers have frozen into place a certain topography of civilization, and thereby condemned Eastern Europe to a moral as well as a spatial marginality in the Western story.

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But the constructionist approach has its hazards. Between "invention," "imagination," "representation," and the invocation of "Otherness," the story of the West's failure to see Eastern Europe as it was and as it is runs the risk of sinking under the weight of overtheorized scholarly suspicion. Add "Orientalism" to the mix—the charge that Western writers have deployed patronizing, distancing devices to romanticize Eastern or Southeastern Europe, the better to control it—and the region gets lost all over again, this time in a marshland of well-intentioned compensatory subtlety.

II.

Vesna Goldsworthy's book is an instructive illustration of this lamentable outcome. She has certainly chosen a glorious topic. From Byron to Malcolm Bradbury, British writers especially have set poems, moral tales, travel narratives, adventure stories, gothic mysteries, romantic comedies, and comic operas in Europe's eastern marches. As H.H. Munro ("Saki") put it, the region was "familiarly outlandish"—sufficiently distant and unspoiled to serve as a setting for romantic fantasies and epic dreams, recognizable enough to be juxtaposed with the civilized universe that it uncomfortably abuts.

First came the Greece of Byron and Shelley; and then the obscure half-Germanic, half-oriental Transylvania of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), and the less topographically precise but recognizably middle-European statelets of Anthony Hope's *The Prisoner of Zenda* (1894) and *Sophy of Kravonia* (1906). John Buchan's *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1915) and the Balkan stories of Saki were followed by Graham Greene's *Stamboul Train* (1932), Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express* (1934), Rebecca West's *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* (1941), and, a generation later, Olivia Manning's *Balkan Trilogy* (1960-65).

In between came Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1871), set in Styria; Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the Man* (1894), set in Bulgaria; Edith Durham's *The Burden of the Balkans* (1905) and *High Albania* (1909); Dorothea Gerard's *The Red-Hot Crown* (1909), set in Serbia; Laurence Durrell's *Esprit de Corps* (1957), set in Yugoslavia; and many more obscure works.

There is a rich literary vein to be mined here, and Goldsworthy has a nice critical eye when working directly with the texts. Thus she notes the importance of trains, the way in which so many novels and travelogues in this genre begin with a farewell to the West at some border town or station, or depend for their plot upon Western (usually English) travelers being caught up in an intrigue while enclosed in a railway car: a "tinned Occident" moving through the Balkans, she calls it.

She also captures the curious ambivalence of the English in these tales. They may find the European East (usually the Balkans) bizarre and unruly, but they end up feeling almost at home there. The ex-centric "Ruritanians" and the eccentric Englishmen somehow find common ground. English men or women ascend "Ruritanian" thrones by accident and end up falling half in love with a prince, a princess, or even the simple countryfolk with whom they have become embroiled. Indeed, in a number of these tales, from *The Prisoner of Zenda* to Evelyn Waugh's *Unconditional Surrender*, they are more than a little ambivalent about returning home to England. Goldsworthy suggests that this is because they can display among the natives a natural superiority of character and integrity, whereas at home they would be anonymous and indistinguishable from the suburban mass. She has a point.

Yet the Byronic model for much of her subject matter is also an important clue. In Greece, in Transylvania, in "Ruritania," the English adventurer can put the world to rights, and can exercise a power of moral and political initiative denied him (and certainly her) at home. And there is also another, often forgotten aspect of English letters, from William Cobbett through William Morris to George Orwell: a sustained romantic nostalgia for the lost world of rural England, for simpler untroubled times. This longing for "Ruritania"—and in some of these novels there is even, as Goldsworthy notes, a preserved Ruritania-within-Ruritania, a mountain fastness where good, loyal peasants remain immune to the cynicism and double-dealing of court and city—suggests that a lot of the literature of adventure that she describes is even more about England than she realizes.

So what, then, is wrong with this book? It is, for a start, methodologically tendentious. Everything is imagined, represented, constructed, Orientalized. This would be merely annoying, if the literary creations or the travelers' observations were juxtaposed with local experience, so as to draw the contrast between them and to point up the ways in which English writers collectively forged an enduring and distorted image of another part of the world. But in Goldsworthy's socially constructed universe, there is no reality check. Reality dissolves into culture. When words such as *real*, *documentary*, or *objective* appear in

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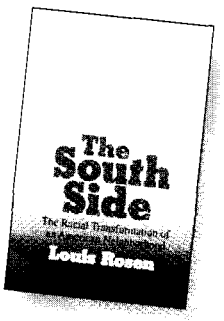

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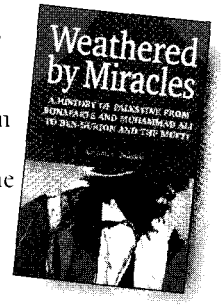

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Goldsworthy's book, they are almost always accompanied by inverted commas, becoming, as it were, ontologically challenged. Thus we read about the "real" Balkans, "objective" descriptions, and "documentary" writing. Even the Balkans themselves are armored with scare quotes—"the Balkans"—to warn the reader against any attempt to measure narrative accounts or literary images against some concrete setting or place.

This mixture of constructionism and irony protects Goldsworthy against any charge that she has herself misread Balkan or East European reality. Sometimes the Balkans exist, as when she notes that Dracula or Zenda are myths about Central Europe and should not be confused with places further south; but mostly they are only inventions. And the fact that in its verbal and adjectival forms ("balkanize," "balkanized") the term carries pejorative connotations leads Goldsworthy to protect almost the whole of the eponymous peninsula from any association with it. The Balkans, in short, are not "Balkan." We are dealing only with images, strategies, prejudices, representations, fantasies. There is no there there.

But it is not just the Archimedean point of an actual place that is missing from this story of its misappropriation by foreign texts. Goldsworthy is herself curiously absent from her own account. To be sure, she evinces frustration, even hints of anger, at what she calls the exploitation (no scare quotes this time) of the region for English literary advantage. But we are never told whether English writers purloined and abused an existing resource or invented it *ex nihilo.* Is Bram Stoker's account of Transylvania accurate? Is Anthony Hope's Zenda faithful to the facts? Of course not, Goldsworthy seems to suggest. It is a stupid and inappropriate question. And yet, when E.M. Forster stays in Bucharest in 1930 as a guest of the British Legation, he is described as having had an "encounter with the 'real' Balkans...." Presumably truer to life than Dracula's castle, but no less unreal for that.

A properly postmodern conclusion should thus apply: there is no "Central Europe," no "Balkans." There is just fiction—which at least pretends to be nothing else, but nonetheless creates images that people take for fact—or "reality," which is a spectrum of illusions best treated as fiction. Yet this would undermine Goldsworthy's very theme. For surely the book is about the way in which English writers took over and made over a distinct and material part of the known world. Reality has to intrude. And so she offers a concession: "There could be as many Balkan 'truths' as there are tellers, and instead of truth we can more usefully talk about the changing perceptions of truthfulness." But this is not very helpful. It explains why we should not try to measure Rebecca West against Lawrence Durrell, or either of them against any "neutral" description; but it does not explain why we should not measure Rebecca West against the places she wrote about. And it certainly does not tell us what Goldsworthy herself thinks.

Fortunately, we have a clue in her book's subtitle: "The Imperialism of the Imagination." As she remarks, "this book seeks to explore the way in which one of the world's most powerful nations exploited the resources of the Balkans to supply its literary and entertainment industries." According to Goldsworthy, the world today sees the Balkans through English eyes because "faced with the economic power of the Western industries of the imagination, indigenous Balkan produce had as much chance of competing as the cotton industry in India when its markets were flooded with British manufactures." And things have not changed: "The power of British-created Balkan 'brand-names' continues to scar thinking about the Balkans as surely as British irrigation programmes have salinated the fertile lands of the Punjab."

There is much, much more in this vein, where Cultural Studies meets Late Marxism in an unhappy marriage of convenience. Poor Lawrence Durrell is condemned for writing about the Balkans "in a deliberately 'repro' format ... with possible financial gain so firmly in his mind," thereby revealing a "recognition of the profitability of the type of imaginative colonisation through which the literary 'Balkans' [sic] continued to be ruthlessly exploited." Goldsworthy even ventures a neo-Leninist interpretation, though she is careful to keep a pusillanimous distance from the resulting crassness of her formulation:

> In assuaging the demands of the popular imagination, the imperialism perpetrated by the entertainment industry plays a role analogous to that played by the more familiar forms of economic imperialism. Indeed a Marxist critic could argue that it provides a substitute "opium of the masses," based on the subordination of other peoples, thereby delaying the class struggle.

Whoever that benighted Marxist critic might be, he or she would at least have noted that Bernard Shaw's jokes at the expense of his Bulgarians in *Arms and the Man* are about class, not ethnicity; the same is true of the sneering asides about the denizens of a Balkan ballroom in David Footman's *Pemberton.* A Balkan setting can disguise a distinctly intra-British prejudice or quip.

The problem is not just that when Cultural Studies dilutes Marxism, everyone loses. It is also that Goldsworthy utterly lacks any sense of humor, any feeling for the ridiculous. She is so certain that her English writers are patronizing their Balkan characters and settings, laughing at their "Eastern" foibles, that she misses her best material. If the Hollywood production of *The Prisoner of Zenda* (1937) represents the acme of ruthless capitalist exploitation, what are we to make of *Duck Soup* (1933)?

The other Marxes receive no mention in this book, but their film is by far the best-known "exploitation" of Balkan stereotypes in Western popular culture, now that the cinematic Dracula has been cut loose from his trans-Danubian roots. To be sure, *Duck Soup* plays off the literary and cinematic stereotype to merciless effect; but the result is a magnificent inversion. When we laugh at Freedonia, we are not sneering at Serbia or Romania; we are sharing a joke at the expense of the movie industry's own clichés. The same quality of internal reference is also present in Durrell's parody of earlier Balkan intrigues, though you would never know it from Goldsworthy. As for Malcolm Bradbury's *Rates of Exchange* (1983), itself dependent on internal reference to earlier works such as Greene's *The Third Man,* its tale of a hapless English lecturer in late-Communist Bucharest is not just funny, it is painfully accurate.

If *Inventing Ruritania* fails to appreciate the strain of parody, pastiche, slapstick, and self-mockery present in much English writing set in "the Balkans," it is not just because its author has a tin ear. It is also because accuracy and parody alike seem to cause her considerable discomfort. She does not like English (or West European) criticism of Greece's discreditable behavior during the Balkan crises ("patronising ... [a] symbolic 'Balkanization' of the Hellenes"), and she attributes it to prejudice and a colonial cast of mind. Goldsworthy does acknowledge that the turbulent history of Serbian and Bulgarian politics in the earlier years of this century is fairly—and rather benignly—reflected in some of the novels that she discusses (the chief difference being that in Ruritania the endings are happier and there is less cruelty), but she passes over the implications of this verisimilitude as quickly as possible.

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The truth is that Goldsworthy evinces a high degree of *ressentiment* toward her material. Foreigners, quite simply, are not welcome and should leave the region alone: "*Of outsiders' views on Balkan problems we are, most of us, tired,*" she writes, quoting with italicized approval a remark of Edith Durham in *High Albania.* When outsiders ignore the Balkans, they are scorning and demeaning the region. When they appropriate it for literary purposes, they are abusing and exploiting it.

And if foreigners take the trouble to learn about the region and even to intervene sympathetically, that will not do either. In recent years, Goldsworthy writes, "the degree to which the area has presented a blank canvas upon which Europe's political unconscious plays out its taboos and hidden anxieties has become apparent once again." Her book concludes with a tirade against "media-based industries of conscience" that need to manufacture, "in order to meet an insatiable appetite for involvement [sic] ... countless new 'Others' both at home and abroad." The "Other" in question, one is driven to conclude, is the Serbs. Together with her manifest sympathy for the Serbophile Rebecca West, the only English writer to get a truly soft ride in this book, this suggests a parochial and partisan perspective that Goldsworthy was unable altogether to repress.

III.

It is a relief to move from the Balkans to Central Europe. That is not always the case: Central European history, with all its grievances and obsessions, can match anything the Balkans have to offer. Hitler came from Central Europe, after all, and his paranoid obsession with the German-Slav conflict is rooted in a distinctively Austro-Bohemian past. (Goldsworthy rightly takes Robert Kaplan to task for suggesting, in *Balkan Ghosts,* a Balkan dimension to this Central European element in Hitler's background.) And nothing in the Balkans can match the Poles or the Czechs at their glummest, caught between grim, skeptical irony and sorrowful, self-pitying bathos. *Inventing Bohemia,* or a compensatory history of unknown Central Europe, would be a lugubrious book indeed.

But Derek Sayer's *The Coasts of Bohemia* is nothing of the kind. It is an ambitious, elegantly written, and sympathetic account of the art, the literature, and the politics of the Czech people. Concentrating on the history of the Czech Lands, but above all on Bohemia and especially Prague, from the National Awakening in the nineteenth century

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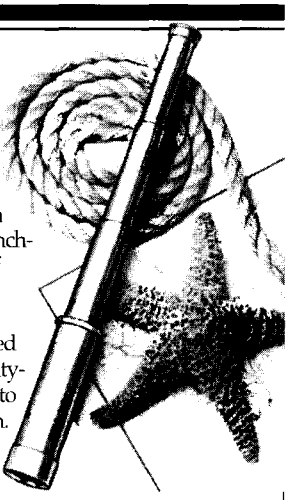

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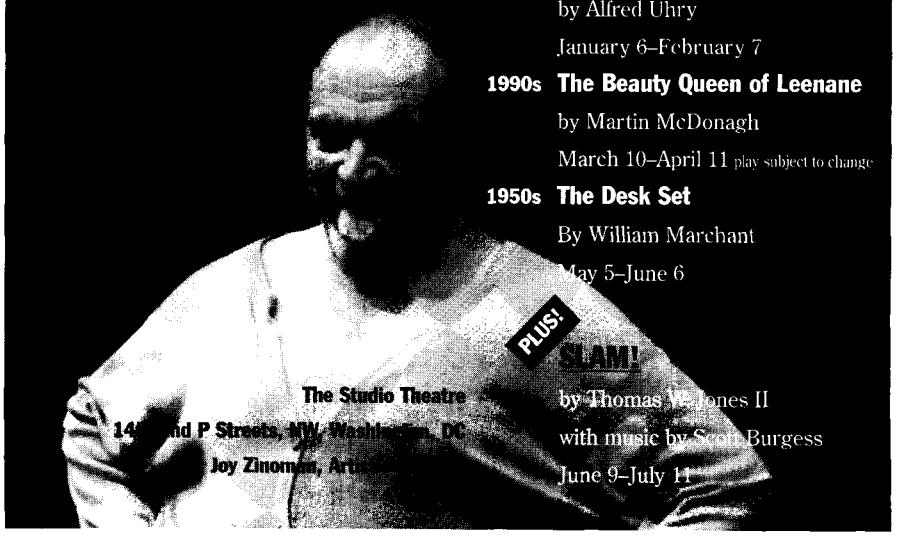

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through the decades of Communist decline, Sayer saunters gracefully and with sure footing back and forth across centuries of Czech religion, mythology, and history, displaying enthusiasm and engagement but immune to the usual self-serving national illusions. He hardly ever gives in to the temptation to overcompensate for centuries of foreign persecution or neglect. Perhaps the worst thing to be said of Sayer's book is that it is inebriated by the abundance of its material, and so the author occasionally resorts to lists of names and works of art, resulting in pages of cascading examples that can at times become encyclopedic, and even a bit confusing.

What little defensiveness Sayer betrays on behalf of his material comes at the beginning of his book, when he reminds his reader of the injustices to which the Czech past has been subject. Bohemia is not in Eastern Europe, he insists. It is not even particularly "bohemian." Left to its own devices, it would have been, and occasionally it was, just like the West, and a part of it, too. As it is, "we" take account of it only when its crises intersect with mainstream history: in 1620, at the Battle of White Mountain (when the Protestant Bohemian Estates were destroyed by the armies of the Counter-Reformation at the start of the Thirty Years' War); in 1938; in 1968; in 1989. Otherwise it disappears from Western consciousness.

Worse, in Sayer's view, Bohemia has been denied its rightful place not just in its own history but in ours. How many cultivated Westerners know about Czech achievements in linguistics, or in modern art? Sayer complains that "it is acceptable for the Museum of Modern Art in New York to stage what it calls a 'comprehensive' retrospective show on 'Dada, Surrealism and Their Heritage,' whose extensive catalogue contains not one reference to Prague or the Czechoslovak Surrealist Group in its text, its very detailed chronology, or its bibliography." He is right; and because he doesn't make a meal of it, his point is well taken. Before the redrawing of Europe's maps after 1948, Czech avant-garde artists such as Karel Teige were indeed better known and understood in the West—though even before the Munich capitulation Alfons Mucha, the great national painter of Bohemian epic narratives and the illustrator of Czechoslovak postage stamps, was better known (and still is) as Alphonse Mucha, the fin-de-siècle Paris-based designer of art-deco posters.

Once Sayer hits his stride, and has drawn the obligatory contrast between the depth and range of modern Czech art and thought and the parochial ignorance of British Prime Ministers, and made the requisite bows toward Czech cosmopolitanism stifled in its flower by war, occupation, and foreign ignorance, his book is a delight. It is based almost without exception on Czech-language sources: encyclopedias, memoirs, antiquarian notices, biographies, exhibition and museum catalogues, travel guides, and much else, including an older generation of Czech historical scholarship, which might itself be thought a form of compensatory scholarship in its own right. But the uses to which Sayer puts these sources are, with one exception, exemplary.

The exception is Sayer's depiction of the Hungarian repression of Slovak schools and the Slovak language in the years before World War I. In his account, he draws exclusively on Czech data and sources. But the story looks rather different from Hungary. And anyway, as Sayer is the first to concede in other contexts, it is not at all clear what is meant by the "Slovak" language, or "Slovak" peasants, in the decades before 1914. One could with equal justice write of Slavonic-tongued Hungarian peasants. A lot depends on who is reporting what data, and why.

Sayer has a tireless eye and ear for detail and illustration, and the volume of local riches that he describes and classifies in his passage from the Bohemian National Awakening through the early 1960s is remarkable not so much for the quality of the material—Sayer makes no overreaching claims for the more obscure composers, painters, and poets whom he assiduously lists—as for its range. If nations are indeed constructed or imagined into being, then the birth of "Czechness" is a fine instance of the protean scale on which the enterprise can be undertaken, from billboards to book illustration, from picture galleries to sports clubs, from public parks to political theater.

The Czech case—for this is, after all, a story that could be told of other places—is interesting for a number of reasons. There almost certainly was a Czech sense of identity—of Czechness—as early as the Hussite reformation, a century before Luther and much earlier than in most other parts of Europe. Long after Jan Hus was burned for heresy, in 1415, Prague and Bohemia remained a stronghold of literary and religious dissent, which was crushed in 1620 when the country's ruling class was punitively expropriated, exiled, or killed by the forces of Empire and the Catholic Church, to be replaced by a new elite of German-speaking Imperial camp followers and agents. For over two hundred years, the Czech language, and what remained of a distinctive Czech identity, was driven into the countryside, where it survived, barely, but only in spoken form.

In the mid-Victorian era, Bohemia and Moravia (the Czech Lands) still consisted of a German-speaking aristocracy and urban bourgeoisie surrounded by isolated and mostly illiterate Slav-language-speaking peasants. By 1910, however, thanks to huge efforts by the advocates and artisans of the National Awakening, and abetted by a rapid industrialization that sucked Czech-speaking villagers into the towns at an unprecedented rate, Prague and most other large towns were overwhelmingly Czech-speaking (though German was still the language of the cultivated). By the time independence from Austria was declared, in 1918, the Czechs had reinvented themselves as a nation, defined by a language that only they could speak and by the cultural identity that was being forged within it.

Sayer has much to say about all this—about language and identity, about self-serving national myths (and historical forgeries that helped create and sustain them), and about the uses of identity and identification in nation-building and state-building. He has no illusions about even the most admired and sanctified of his protagonists, Tomás Masaryk. *The Czech Question*, an influential pedagogic text by Czechoslovakia's first president, opportunistically exploited religious prejudice and national mythology in order to claim a politically expedient lineage for Czech national identity; and Sayer says so. Of Alfons Mucha's *Slovanská epopej* (*Slav Epic*, completed in 1928), a monumental series of pictorial depictions of the Czech story from medieval myths to the present, he writes: "On one level his indiscriminate plundering [of religious motifs] testifies to just how secularized religion had by then become. But it equally witnesses the ascension of the national and the ethnic into the realm of the sacred."

Notably impressive is the way Sayer handles the most sensitive issue of all, and one which is, once again, a distinctively Czech variation on a common Eastern European theme. Despite the fact that, by prevailing regional standards, interwar Czechoslovakia was a liberal, constitutional, and egalitarian society, it was far from perfect. After 1918, Czechs represented just half the total population ruled from Prague—the rest consisting of Slovaks, Germans, Jews, Hungarians, and sub-Carpathian Ruthenes (from what is now part of western Ukraine). As Sayer points out, writing of the emphasis well before independence upon Czechness

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in everything from artistic subjects to street names, "this newly nationalized social space was, of course, a set of cultural representations institutionally imposed upon a demographic reality which was still, as a matter of fact, multiethnic."

But the national mythology, the monuments, the museums, the school curricula, and much else spoke above all of Czechness, of the Czech national revival of the previous century, the glories of Czech poetry, music, language, and so on. In Sayer's words, again, discussing the nationalist and anti-German political uses to which nineteenth-century cultural history was put after 1918, "the National Museum, the art gallery in the Sternberk palace, the Bohemian Royal Society, and the rest of these institutions were not the early manifestations of a Czech national rebirth. Many of them were hijacked for that project later, and their foundation retrospectively appropriated for nationalist genealogies."

The image presented after independence, to the country and to the world at large, was thus rather parochial—and, to the extent that it was advertised as liberal and cosmopolitan, misleading. Ruthenes and Hungarians were ignored. Slovaks, who were still mostly peasants with elementary education at best, were scorned. Jews were not subject to discrimination, but they faced a steady undercurrent of anti-Semitic resentment, for being German-speakers and for being Jews. The Germans themselves, now a majority only in the "Sudeten" regions of northern and southern Bohemia and Moravia, were historically resented and politically slighted. When, in the aftermath of Munich, the country fell apart, with Hungary and Poland each grabbing a small corner, the Slovaks declaring independence, and Germany claiming the rest, only the Czechs (and the Jews, who had come to identify with the Republic and anyway had no alternatives) were sorry.

Sayer cannot resist a hint of nostalgia for the First Czechoslovak Republic. It was, like Weimar Germany, a place in which increasingly ugly politics and innovative art flourished side by side; but he is quick to acknowledge that there had been an undercurrent of national populism, inherited from the National Awakening, which always boded ill. During World War II, the Czech Lands did not suffer overmuch. Sayer reminds us that of the 360,000 Czech and Slovak victims of Hitler, 260,000 were Jews, a point carefully underemphasized in postwar commemoration.

And once Hitler had all but rid the land of one minority, the Czechs in 1945

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What are the facts?

Historical Background—The Golan was always part of the Jewish homeland. The Syrian claim to the Golan is tenuous. Syria, as a political entity, did not exist at all until after the first World War.

Even before the establishment of Israel in 1948, the Syrians subjected the villages in northern Israel to almost daily shellings, making normal life impossible. In the 1967 Six-Day War, Syria attacked Israel and was defeated. Israel occupied the Golan Heights and in 1981, for all practical purposes annexed the area.

Syria and its President—Syria is the most destabilizing influence in the Middle East. It is classified by the U.S. State Department as a narcotics-dealing and terrorist state. Its main fury is directed at Israel, which is perceived as a bulwark of Western influence and civilization, both of which Syria totally rejects.

Syria's President, Hafez Assad, is a tyrant, every bit as ruthless as his Iraqi counterpart, Saddam Hussein. Syria is a world center for terrorism. It still harbors Nazi bigwigs, who found welcome there after the World War. Few doubt that Assad was the mastermind in the suicide attack on the Marine barracks in Beirut in which 241 Americans died, and in the explosion of Pan Am flight #103 in which 270 people lost their lives. He oversees one of the largest narcotics operations in the world.

Military Security—The Golan is about the size of Queens, NY. If it were part of Syria it would be less than 1% of its territory. But it is of a supreme strategic importance to Israel. Its high ground provides early-warning capability, without which Israel would be subject to surprise attack by the Syrians. Its loss would obligate Israel to maintain a state of mobilization that would be economically and socially untenable. On the Golan itself, there are only two natural bottlenecks through which tanks can advance. Those choke points are defensible and made possible the repulse of 1400 Syrian tanks that attacked Israel in the 1973 war. But with the Golan in Syrian hands, and without the radar installations that would give Israel warning of any military movements, thousands of tanks–backed up by missiles and airplanes–could overrun Israel in a matter of hours. The Golan does not make for perfect defense, but it gives Israel a small breathing space for mobilization.

"With the Golan in Israeli hands, attacking Arabs could be confident of defeat and peace would be preserved. To hand the Golan to Syria is a prescription for war and for Israel's destruction."

The Golan is the source of over one-third of Israel's fresh water. In 1964, with the Golan in Syrian hands, Syria attempted to divert these headwaters and to cripple Israel's water supply. It is more than likely that, given another opportunity, Syria would once again attempt to destroy Israel's water supply.

In its keen desire to bring peace to its people, after more than fifty years of war and bloodshed, Israel had been prepared to make far-reaching concessions to Syria on the Golan, in exchange for real peace. But Benjamin Netanyahu, who has promised his people *shalom batuach* (peace with security) is not prepared to give up all of the Golan and to return to the "death trap" borders of 1967 or anything close to them. In order to survive within such borders, Israel would have to rely on the goodwill of the Arab states, most of which—with the recent exception of Jordan and of the cold peace with Egypt—are still in a declared state of war with Israel. An aggressor will attack only if confident of victory. With the Golan in Israeli hands, attacking Arabs could be confident of defeat, and peace would be preserved. To hand the Golan to Syria is a prescription for war and for Israel's destruction.

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set about finishing the job by expelling the remaining German and Hungarian population by force. As a result, the reconstituted postwar Czechoslovak state was virtually homogenous, consisting of Czechs and Slovaks alone. Thanks to Hitler, the nineteenth-century nationalist claim that land and people were one and were Czech (or, grudgingly, Slovak) had come true. "What was left was a denuded landscape, shorn of its ethnic and social complexities and ripe for the imposition of a unitary national script."

It was in these circumstances that the Communists came to power in February 1948. Sayer cuts right into a controversial thicket here, and he makes clear his view that Czech communism, far from being an alien Russian imposition, had roots deep in the political and cultural soil of the place. In support of this, he adduces not just the well-known election results of 1946, when the local Communists did better in a free and open vote in the Czech Lands (Slovaks were more reticent) than anywhere else in Europe. He also points to the Communists' successful and copious appropriation of prevailing pre-war Czech motifs in popular art, music, history, pedagogy, and folklore.

Sayer reminds his readers that much of the moral and material prologue to communism was performed by President Edvard Benes and the legislation that he promulgated and supported between May 1945 and February 1948: expropriating owners, expelling minorities, nationalizing businesses, and punishing political opponents by imprisonment or exclusion from public life. And he rightly concludes that if the Czech Communists were able to impose so repressive, uniform, relentless, and resentful a regime, which was harsh and bleak even by communism's own standards, some part of the responsibility must lie with their national-liberal and even socialist predecessors, whose emphasis on "us" against "them," Czechs against outsiders, the people against rapacious rulers and other privileged minorities, made their task so much easier.

This provincial element in Czech national sentiment, before and during the communist era, is well-captured in the popular nineteenth-century phrase "*Malé ale nase*"—"it may be small, but it's ours"—applied to everything from domestic landscapes to sporting achievements. Sayer records this, and notes, too, the protean range of the Czech phrase "*U nas*," meaning everything from "our place," as in "come to dinner at our place tonight," to "our fatherland," with the "our" implicitly excluding those who are not of the native soil. He should have added that this linguistic propensity to slide effortlessly from cozy domesticity into ethnocentric exclusivism in one phrase is present in many other European languages, including Hungarian, the other Slav languages, German ("*Bei Uns*") and French ("*Chez nous*"). English and Italian, by contrast, lack this facility, the easy and chilling conflation of hearth, home, homeland, homogeneity, and *Heimat*.

IV.

Anyone interested in Czechoslovakia and the modern Czech Republic should read this book; it is sad that there is no equivalent for any other country in the region. Despite his self-confessed enthusiasm for a place and a theme that represented for him a new scholarly departure, Sayer has avoided the usual pitfalls—a patronizing Western distance, or the temptation to "go native" and be more national and defensive than the locals themselves; and he has engaged some of the thorniest and most disputed issues in the modern Czech past. He seems even to share Milan Kundera's distaste for the Czech (and Eastern European) assimilation of culture and people, in which the writer, the artist, and the intellectual are highly esteemed, but are expected in return to respond and be responsible to the community: that "national circle of intimacy" in which, as Kundera has written, "everything and everyone (critics, historians, compatriots as well as foreigners) hooks the art onto the great national family portrait photo and will not let it get away."

This is an important if disquieting reminder of another aspect of Central Europe, the Balkans, and the rest of Eastern Europe. The insecurity of national identity—in a part of the world where states, nations, and peoples have been made and unmade with unnerving frequency—inevitably leads not just to a pressure on local artists and scholars to be "national," or at least loyal, but also to what one might call the Ancient Mariner Syndrome: the propensity to grip the outsider by the shoulder and insist on telling and retelling the tragic national story, lest it be lost or forgotten. It is not for nothing that the Czech national anthem is *Kde domuv muj?*, or "Where is my homeland?"

The role of the Western audience in this drama is mostly to listen respectfully. Still, there are things that only an outsider can say, and they are no less pertinent for being said from the outside. To begin with, the history of Western Europe's dealings with Eastern Europe is only imperfectly captured in the metaphor of "colonialism," however generously conceived. Locally based historians of countries that have fallen victim to foreign predators have understandably been disposed to see their past as one in which "they" did it to "us"; and since 1989 the claim has been heard once again, this time to account for the depredations of communism.

To be sure, Hitler and Stalin were responsible for their crimes; but the extent to which the *active* engagement of any other power, such as Britain, France, Italy, or the United States, can be held accountable for the fate of many of the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe is much less clear. And even Hitler and Stalin were made more or less welcome, and received more or less local encouragement, in different parts of Eastern Europe at different times. It is true that the Eastern European states have lacked the sort of international autonomy that goes with size and wealth; but it is also true that they have been more than just passive victims of the marauding intentions of others.

One reason for this is precisely the fact of national independence. As Frantisek Palacký, the "Father of the Czech Nation," famously expressed it in April 1848: "Imagine the Austrian Empire fragmented into a multitude of greater and lesser republics. What a nice basis for universal Russian monarchy." We cannot reconstitute Habsburgia—though I would go so far as to say that the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918 was perhaps the worst thing that could have happened to almost all of its lands and citizens. Yet it is the experience of national independence, and the resulting zero-sum conflicts with other self-described nations within borders and across them, that have contributed more than anything to the tragedy of modern Central and Southeastern European history. Membership in the European Union may help make good, in Central Europe at least, some of the grim history of the region since 1918; but a clear-eyed understanding of that same history will help, too.

Which brings us back to the Balkans. It is a sad irony that Tito's success in keeping Yugoslavia out of Stalin's grasp after 1948 contributed indirectly to the present morass by deluding his country's own intelligentsia—and their foreign admirers—into forgetting their own past. The intellectuals of Belgrade and Zagreb told themselves and their readers fond tales of historical conflicts resolved, of national and social divisions overcome, of successful experiments in workers' control, and so on. Similar fables

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were being spun, of course, in Soviet-controlled Eastern Europe, but there nobody believed them. That is the difference. Vesna Goldsworthy's post-Marxist lucubrations on the theme of colonial appropriation would provoke dismissive hilarity in Warsaw or Budapest today; but the shell-shocked victims of Yugoslavia's collapse have yet to come to terms with their own damaged condition.

When they do, they may come to reflect that the problem in the lands between Austria and Istanbul for many long years has been not too much foreign interest and foreign involvement but too little. I was in Zagreb with a group of liberal Croatian intellectuals when the Dayton Accords were signed. "There," one of them said, "the Americans have finally got what they want." "What do you mean?" I asked. "Don't you see?" replied my friend. "The United States has managed to get a military foothold in the Balkans. It's what they've been waiting for. They'll never leave now." "But you told me," I replied, "that the problem was that the West didn't care enough about the region." "That's true," he said, "they don't." The idea that the United States, or any other Western power, should have the remotest intention of "getting a foothold" in the Balkans had never crossed my mind. I had supposed that the real problem was utter and callous Western indifference. For a Croatian intellectual, however, or a Serbian intellectual, the Balkans have been uppermost in English and American and Western thoughts for more than a century. Or they should have been. Or both. How else can you explain anything?

The gap between the dispassionate reflections of *The Coasts of Bohemia* and the resentful denials of *Inventing Ruritania* is thus indicative of more than just their authors' disparate methods and concerns. It illustrates the speed with which the Czechs' own discussion of Czech history is catching up with the history itself; and the same is true of Hungary and Poland. In Serbia and Croatia, meanwhile, as in Romania and even Greece, much of that history, when presented to a local audience, is subject to taboo or to scholarly self-censorship. There delusion abounds.

In truth, most Westerners knew little and cared less about the former Yugoslavia, and for this Yugoslav intellectuals must bear some of the responsibility. Between resentment at outsiders for interfering or supporting what are seen locally as partisan positions, and the fading illusions of the Belgrade-based Praxis school of Marxism, many Yugoslav writers, scholars, and artists could not think straight about their own country, and so they missed the chance to explain it to the world. This is one of the reasons why Yugoslav Communist apparatchiks-turned-nationalists have been able to sell themselves to the international community as domestic leaders and international interlocutors.

After all, no Western leader in the decades before 1989 was seriously deluded into thinking he could "work" with petty Communist dictators. And thanks in some measure to the earlier efforts of men such as Adam Michnik and Václav Havel, no American or Western European diplomat would have asserted that Czechoslovakia's Gustáv Husák was a man "with whom one could do business," or that the erstwhile First Secretaries of the Communist Parties of Bulgaria or even Poland were "statesmen." Yet that is precisely how Franjo Tudjman and Slobodan Milosevic have been variously described by Richard Holbrooke and Bill Clinton.

This state of affairs has led the Western allies and the United Nations from one Balkan fiasco to another, and it cannot reasonably be attributed to postcolonial or para-Ruritanian illusions. Tudjman of Croatia looks and sometimes acts like the dictator of a latter-day Freedonia; but far from being snubbed or mocked, he is taken—and is thus encouraged to take himself—altogether seriously. A little more knowledge of the ghastlier episodes of the recent Balkan past might make the leaders of the West pause in their choice of words and friends. It would certainly equip them better to intervene more effectively.

For the Balkan past is ghastly. And some unpleasing images just are true.

What I Said to Him in a Dream As He Eyed the Hanging Beam

What about that fissure Rilke speaks of
Between the exact ending
Of a year and the beginning of the next,
When the cold snaps off the hands of clocks,
And you enter the joinery of hours,
The corners of your breathing. The edges. The truth.
I'll help you stop the stars from reeling.
Together, we'll study the microscopic tear in the calendar.
See where the harm has been done by you and by others.
Most men refuse to open the lower, jammed drawer
Of their own story, to finger the rosetta stone.
But not you.
You're ready for the glare of hieroglyphics,
What you wrote, in fear or anger, to some part of yourself.
To desire death won't give you or me
Enough love to last the night.
And then, who knows,
We may still have to travel the earth in search of lost pages.
I need your weakness, its weight,
Your relics found at the back of a museum,
Telling you, as a man,
You've failed to deliver the rope of gold.
Wherever you go with your grief,
Remember any keyhole contains constellations.
No matter how you scribe the arc of lost power,
You're more than a man shoved into the sleeves of a heavy coat.
More than a stack of scribbled ink.
You're my new world cloud. Motionless. Monumental.
Floating above the worn, damp, marble statues,
And broken steps where you take yourself back to the beginning
When all this pain and mischief began.
In your true form,
You can slip through any aperture.
You can see. You can see and read the sealed envelopes.

J. P. White

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Vesna Goldsworthy writes dismissively of what she calls the "new orientalising move" of the 1990s: "that the Balkans are not truly 'European' in so far as wars of 'Balkan' brutality are unthinkable elsewhere in Europe at the end of the twentieth century." But the fact is that such wars are unthinkable in most of the rest of Europe. This is not because the rest of the subcontinent is a superior place, though it has certainly been a more fortunate one. It is because the history of the second half of our century has ordained things thus.

Let's face it. The truly brutal European wars of our century have been confined to Eastern and Southeastern Europe. Nothing in modern American, British, French, Italian, or even Spanish experience can match the traumatic dislocation, the murderous violence, and the sheer sustained sadism of the civil wars in and between Balkan states before 1914, between 1941 and 1948, or since 1991. Only the German war of extermination carried out in Poland, the Baltic lands, and Ukraine is comparable, and it has long since become our modern parable of absolute evil. To pretend that the history of Eastern or Southeastern Europe would look like that of Western Europe if only Western observers didn't "orientalize" the region is a grievous error. There are reasons for the sheer awfulness of Balkan conflicts, of course; but awful they are. There is nothing imagined, invented, represented, constructed, appropriated, or orientalized about such a claim. It is a fact.

TONY JUDT'S new book *The Burden of Responsibility: Blum, Camus, Aron and the French Twentieth Century* will be published this fall by University of Chicago Press.

Inside, Outside

BY RUTH SHALIT

Bridget Jones's Diary by Helen Fielding

(Viking, 271 pp., $22.95)

The Body Project: An Intimate History of American Girls by Joan Jacobs Brumberg

(Random House, 267 pp., $25)

In the mid-1970s, during the juvenescence of academic feminism, a clutch of socially-minded theorists, poets, and other progressive critics of the canon set out to rectify the "silencing" of the first-person female confessional. Writers such as Kate Millett, Adrienne Rich, and Nancy Mairs argued that female subjectivity, narrativity, and interiority had been devalued and squelched by patriarchy. Whereas the male writer was literally the author of his being—"insert[ing] his own text forcefully into the world-text," as Mairs subtly put it—a woman aspiring to promulgate her private self had a more difficult road to tread. Overburdened with domestic tasks, taught to subdue her passions and to put others' needs first, she could not write in heroic tones about her life or outline the progress of her soul.

In *Silences*, in 1978, Tillie Olsen laid out entire phyla of female quietude: work aborted, deferred, denied, defeated by the "patriarchal injunctions" which bind a woman's life. Literary history, Olsen argued, was dark with such silences: "foreground silences," "censorship silences," "absences that are a kind of silence," "silences where the lives never come to writing." (Even Olsen herself was not immune: due to this cultural repression of female utterance, she wrote, her own work "died. What demanded to be written, did not.... A Ford grant in literature, awarded me on nomination by others, came almost too late.") In their jeremiads against mutedness, Olsen and the other insurgents were drawing on the writings of theorists such as Hélène Cixous, who argued in 1975 that if more women could somehow "come to voice," could deign to make public their innermost truths and secrets, "all the histories, all the stories in the world, would be there to retell differently." Until such time, it was thought, these clandestine narratives would remain inchoate, fragmentary, unexpressed.

Until approximately now. We are awash in female inner space, in the inward-looking literature of women's lives; in their diaries and their journals, their memoirs and their anthems. We are choking on interiority, or what passes for it. In the last few years, the literature of female self-disclosure has become a mainstay of American publishing houses, as well as a staple of feminist historiography. In a series of glossy memoirs, well-heeled women from bookish backgrounds have laid bare their lives, thoughts, and feelings, exposed their secret cores of hiddenness, confessed their disastrous passions for close relatives. Lately, the forewords to such anthologies of "writing women's lives" have gotten a bit awkward, as the editors concede that the foes of silencing need no longer feel polemically embattled. "The tradition of women's autobiography is now long enough to be nurturing itself," allows Phyllis Rose, editor of the *Norton Book of Women's Lives*. "Maybe personal narrative has too much of a sway in our culture. Where has abstract, discursive writing gone?"

But the most significant milestones in the contemporary career of feminine inner space have occurred in popular culture. There is the apotheosis of Ally McBeal, the despondent, scatterbrained career waif whose Botox reveries and gyno-cream epiphanies have transfixed the public consciousness. And now there is *Bridget Jones's Diary*, the spectacularly successful novel by the British journalist Helen Fielding, a fictional diary composed of the highly abbreviated jottings of another young, hip, modern chick, whipsawed between Zen and Flow, Germaine Greer and *Marie Claire*, *feng shui* and Agnès B.

Like Ally, Bridget is also a querulous "singleton." While her friends mutate into "smug marrieds, having children plop, plop, plop, left, right and centre," she is womb-tight and woebegone: monitoring her biological clock, obsessing over her "sell-by date," careering "rudderless and boyfriendless through dysfunctional relationships and professional stagnation."

But there is something a little odd about this It Girl of female interiority. She keeps a diary, which is supposed to record her innermost thoughts, but her innermost looks alarmingly like her outermost. This is female interiority defined solely through externals. In this, Bridget resembles Ally, whose wan little face comes alive only when she looks in the mirror. Ally yearns to be a street person, unburdened of social anxieties, "but

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then I wouldn't get to wear my outfits." The inner life of Bridget Jones is a neurotic almanac of numbers of calories consumed and grams of cellulite winnowed. "Thursday 23 February," reads a typical entry. "125 lbs. If only I could stay under 126 lbs. And not keep bobbing up and down like a drowning corpse—drowning in fat."

Reading *Bridget Jones's Diary* is a minor tawdry pleasure, akin to leafing through catalogs, or eating vanilla pudding in bed. The book promises a voyeuristic peek into the heart of the gamine, that ubiquitous, everyday, wonderful girl about whom thousands of popular songs and movies have been made. Bridget is the sort of creature who muffs her multiplication tables and cannot remember what letter comes before "J," but can confidently rattle off the number of calories in a boiled egg (75), a banana (80), and a green cocktail olive (9); who scours her drawer for sexy undies but finds only "giant Mummy-pant horror"; whose mailbox is full, not of valentines, but of threatening letters noting "non-payment of minimum payment." Her gadget-packed apartment is a single girl's paradise, crammed with loofahs and pasta makers, bread machines and ice cream churns gathering dust in the closet.

Within the course of a year, she loses 72 pounds, and gains 74. She vows to arrive early for work, only to be stymied by lost keys and a crisis of black opaque tights, which are snarled in Gordian knots at the bottom of her laundry bin. She allows herself to be seduced by a rake, then misses the assignation because she can't hear the doorbell over the roar of her blow-dryer. She unlocks her Inner Bitch, deep-conditions her hair, eats Mueslix out of the packet with a spoon. She lives a life of brand names and proper names. She is a walking, talking, exfoliating cultural signifier.

Those of us who have dialed Star-69, pressed a sly computer key to conceal a cheeky e-mail from the prying eyes of coworkers, or found ourselves wishing that we could talk things through with our parents over lunch "as if this were *Sleepless in Seattle*," will be hard-pressed not to respond with tittering affection to the cavalcade of brand names, to all the glib patter about folic acid and smoothies, codependence and loving too much, aromatherapy and Color Me Beautiful, compilation mood tapes that go unmade and culinary gadgets that go unused. These are the cultural markers of premillennial womanhood; and the book is a Baedeker to the indispensable and disquieting comforts of mass culture.

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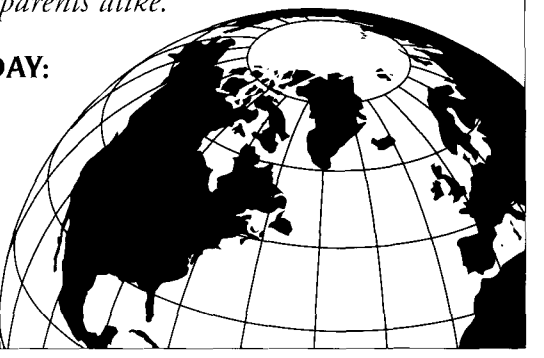

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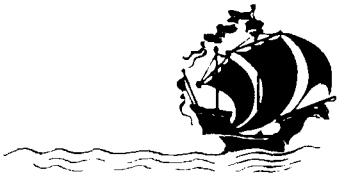

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But *Bridget Jones* is being promoted as much more than that. Bridget's stream of brand-consciousness, her dizzying litanies of externalities, have been hailed as interiority itself, a triumph of female self-expression. According to *Ms.* magazine, the book represents a "welcome addition to modern feminist literature"—"Bridget's feminist battles" take place not "at rallies but internally." *The New Yorker* claims that the book is about "the anxiety of self-presentation"; Bridget is "both Everywoman and an implicitly ironic observer of Everywoman."

But Bridget's attitude toward all of this mass-culture banality is the very opposite of ironic. Her triviality is a matter of life and death, the whole contents of her cluttered mind. Her chatter about Susan Sarandon and Pinot Grigio and Baby Gap is earnest, incantatory, infused with near-spiritual ardor. Her language is the language of "devout consumption," to use Veblen's sardonic phrase.

Bridget Jones is not a sly satirist of the makeover culture. She is, poor thing, its archetypal object. She is constantly interrogating and experimenting with her looks, using beauty tips and best-dressed lists to implement full-scale changes of identity. She sees cosmetics as a tool of self-discovery, a way to project an image of herself as someone with "inner poise," a "woman of substance." Her response to her various setbacks and mortifications is not to look within but to change her packaging. "Decided needed to spend more time on appearance, like Hollywood stars," she writes, after yet another of her capers goes awry. "Have therefore spent ages putting concealer under eyes, blusher on cheeks, and defining fading features."

A diary is supposed to be a narrative of inner discovery, a dramatic performance of the self; but Bridget's diary is a ledger, and there is alarmingly little "self" in it. It has been expunged by the technology of appearances, by hot wax and pumice stone and other implements of the female surface. "So much harvesting and crop spraying to be done," she writes. "Legs to be waxed, underarms shaved, eyebrows plucked, skin exfoliated and moisturized, spots cleansed, roots dyed, eyelashes tinted, nails filed, cellulite massaged, stomach muscles exercised." When all of her ablutions come to naught, Bridget falls into the slough of despond. "Was believing could totally re-invent self in space of small number of days," she writes. "Thereby negating impact of Daniel's humiliating infidelity since it had happened to me in a previous incarnation and would never have happened to my new, improved self." For Bridget Jones, flashes of self-awareness come only intermittently. "Sunday, December 24," she writes. "V. confused about what is and is not reality."

To academia's archivists of female interiority, the plaint of Bridget Jones will have a familiar ring. During the last decade, feminist scholars have embarked on a dogged campaign to uncover and to promote the timid exploits of "lesser lives," as revealed in the prayerful and humble diaries of unpaid wet nurses, hapless milkmaids, shy spinsters, and sweet domestics. Great claims were made for the revolutionary potential of these "found narratives," which often amounted to little more than the daily record-keeping of genteel housewifery. "As feminists have insisted that battles for power, authenticity, moral stature, and survival occur as fiercely within the domestic as in the public arena of life, what was once seen as placidly domestic now offers the reader a world charged with great issues," writes Jill Ker Conway in the introduction to *Written by Herself.* The testimonies of these innumerable pale and pious heroines, Conway insists, are "filled with drama and challenge . . . and [are] as potentially instructive as any male life.'

But too often, alas, the diaries of the widows and the fishwives turn out to be something less than one would hope. These redoubtable women were reluctant to discuss personal emotion, or expose their lives, thoughts, and feelings in any meaningful way. Instead, the diaries are either pathetic tales of endless drudgery ("Spent the day cleaning and scowering," reads the typical plaint of one such housekeeper); or exaltations of the joys of wifehood and motherhood.

There is, in fact, a poignant gulf between the swaggering claims of the feminist historiographers and the mild, matronly tone of the actual documents, which are often cloying paeans to the glowing hearth and the patter of little feet. Thus the editors of *Her Own Life* trumpet the diary of Anne Clifford, Countess of Dorset, Pembroke, and Montgomery, as a proto-feminist manifesto, a fiery "statement of Anne Clifford's bold and tenacious belief that she was, though female, the rightful heir to her family's estates. What strikes one first . . . is the impression of strength of character—an individual woman holding out against the combined patriarchal forces of father, uncles, husbands, lawyers, churchmen, and even the king." But little of this spirit of resistance, this inner strength, can be found in the diary itself, which is quite simply a running account of Ann's daily doings. "Upon the 28th at this time," she writes in January 1617, "I wore a plain green flannel gown that William Punn made me, and my yellow taffety waistcoat. . . . May 1617. The 12th, I began to dress my head with a roll. . . . June 1617. The 6th, after supper, we went in the coach to Goodwife Sisley's, and ate so much cheese there that it made me sick." Never mind the new social history; sometimes silence is golden.

Among the newly discovered female voices, the most famous is probably Elizabeth Shackleton, the Bridget Jones of the eighteenth-century gentry. Altogether lacking in self-reflection, her thirty-nine minutely detailed diaries are instead a compulsive logbook of food consumed ("Bought a small quantity of Mackrell," she writes in 1777), as well as a doleful catalog of the strategies she employed to compensate for her dwindling physical charms. "I now have only five teeth in all my head," she wrote mournfully in May of 1779. "I left off my old stays & put on my best stays for Good." Most striking is Mrs. Shackleton's fevered inventory of her many possessions—her "beautifull flower'd Muslin," her "new drab Callimanco quilted petticoat," her "favourite, pritty, red & white Linnen gown," and her endless negligées, nightgowns, and sacks, which she viewed as "potent extensions of the self," in the words of Amanda Vickery in *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England.*

Cramped by custom, corset, and crinoline, Mrs. Shackleton was a delicate creature, prone to invalidism and hysteria. As she aged, she grew fretful, and painfully sensitive to social slights. "The treatment I meet with from all sides as I grow into years almost breaks my Heart," she writes. "And my legs swelling more & more." She is thin-skinned, full of wounded self-regard. Her husband, Mr. Shackleton, "quite hates me, dos not like me." She found her friends and her relatives "Humpy Grumpy," "quere," or "upon reserve." Venturing out to parties all by herself, she was indignant when respect was denied: "My Bror just civil no great joy to see me," she writes. "I neither can nor will bear this treatment." And "No enquiring after poor me all night." And "I came all by myself. No one with me. Small notice of poor me."

The autobiographical pitch and timbre is uncannily close to that of the post-feminist vixen of the hour. "Decide to have cappuccino and chocolate croissants on way to work to cheer self up," writes Bridget Jones two hundred years later. "Do not care about figure. Is no point as no one loves or cares about me." But there is a difference, and in this difference lies the burden of critical judgment. Unlike poor Mrs. Shackleton, poor Bridget Jones is entirely unshack-

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led. She has autonomy, self-sufficiency, freedom to act on her own behalf to improve the circumstances of her life. Yet the wallowing and the languishing, the bathetic, list-making self-absorption, is the same. "Why hasn't Rebecca invited me to her party?" wails Bridget Jones. "Why? Why? No one likes me.... I'm no good at anything. Not men. Not social skills. Not work. Nothing."

Mrs. Shackleton mechanistically listed victuals consumed: "wine, coffee, tea, muffins, toast, Punch, and great pieces of Iced rich Plumb cake." So, too, does Bridget fastidiously record her intake: cigarettes, fat grams, calorie counts. "Food consumed today," is how her diary begins. "Two packets Emmenthal cheese slices. Four cold new potatoes. Two Bloody Marys (count as food as contain Worcester Sauce and Tomatoes)." Both women are unencumbered by thoughts that are not trivial. Both their journals are characterized most of all by the positivism of self-regard.

It is only in the late nineteenth century, after the rise of romanticism and the prestige of subjectivity, and with the rise of psychology, that the female life-writers vindicate the claims of feminist historiography: that public power could make for private impotence, and that the inner life might blossom most fully in those to whom the external had been denied. The best diaries of this period fulfill the most extravagant theories of the revisionists. They are characterized by genuine inwardness, by richness of feeling, by a focus on individual experience; they are genuine narratives of inner discovery, records of self-making.

In a journal excerpted in *Written by Herself*, Ellen Glasgow, the novelist, and a self-educated bluestocking born in 1873, writes movingly of the contrast between her "external life," with its "smooth conventional surface," and her "interior world—that far republic of the spirit," in which she "ranged ... free and wild and a rebel." Lucy Larcom, a mill worker and poet born in 1824, complains in her diary of the din of the factory, of the "buzzing and hissing and whizzing of pulleys and rollers and spindles and flyers around me." But, she continued, she didn't mind—so absorbing were the real events of her inner life. "I defied the machinery to make me its slave," she wrote. "Its incessant discords could not drown the music of my thoughts."

In the day of Larcom and Glasgow, of course, becoming a fuller, more realized person meant paying *less* attention to externalities. When girls in the nineteenth century thought about ways to improve themselves, they almost always focused on their internal character. "Resolved, not to talk about myself or feelings," wrote a teenage girl in 1869, in a diary that is excerpted in *The Body Project*, Joan Jacobs Brumberg's illuminating book about the evolving ideologies of female self-image. "To think before speaking. To work seriously. To be self-restrained in conversation and actions. Not to let my thoughts wander. To be dignified. Interest myself more in others."

Somewhere along the line, Brumberg writes, things changed. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, even as women reveled in a new sense of physical freedom and economic possibility, female subjectivity—that "far republic of the spirit"—was being colonized by external forms of the most superficial and epiphenomenal kind. The efflorescence of a visual consumer culture, the scientific discovery of the calorie, the democratization of mirrors (they were once an unaffordable luxury for the middle class): all conspired to confer upon appearances a psychological and even a spiritual prestige.

The questions women posed to their diaries—What am I here for? Who am I? Who do I want to be?—were still the same, but increasingly the answers revolved around the vicissitudes of weight, hairstyle, complexion. Brumberg quotes from the diary of young Helen Laprovitz, of Amherst, Massachusetts. "How terrible I am," she writes in 1923. "For that I got another pimple." Equally poignant is the 1924 diary of Yvonne Blue, an aspiring poet who fears she is too plump. A "fat, crude, uncouth, misunderstood beast," she calls herself. Determined to achieve coveted thinness, Yvonne begins slimming at age 15. Just as Bridget Jones vows to whittle the circumference of her thighs "by 3 inches (i.e. 1½ inches each) using anticellulite diet," Yvonne Blue employs a faddish booklet called "How to Reduce: New Waistlines for Old." Allowing herself only lettuce, carrots, celery, tea, and consommé, she jotted down everything she consumed. "No cake or pie or ice cream or cookies or candy or nuts or fruits or bread or potatoes or meats or anything," Yvonne lamented in 1926.

Across decades, class boundaries, and continents, the ecstasies of self-vituperation are the same. When Brumberg's adolescent diarists do not lose weight, they berate themselves, and their mood plunges. Their stability depends entirely on the success or failure of their diets. Poor Carol Merano, a dolorous teenager from Westport, Connecticut, refers to herself as a "stuffed sausage" in her 1968 diary. "I'm very depressed tonight," she writes in October of that year. "Same reason: I'm 120 pounds." A month later, in November, she is riding high: "I weigh 112. Everything is great for once." But by the New Year, Carol was back at 120, unhappy and signing herself "Fatty."

The obsession with boys and calories, the neurotic equation of appearance and identity, is understandable in adolescents, a large measure of whose world is defined by how others see them. It is more troubling in grown women, who are supposed to be able to look beyond the physical to more essential matters. But Bridget Jones's interior monologue is the monologue of an overgrown teenager. When she gains two pounds, she tells her diary that she feels "ashamed and repulsive.... I can actually feel the fat splurging out of my body. Tomorrow new Spartan health and beauty regime will begin." A week later, she is again trembling and incapacitated: "Fat body flobbering around. The heat has made my body double in size, I swear.... Am going

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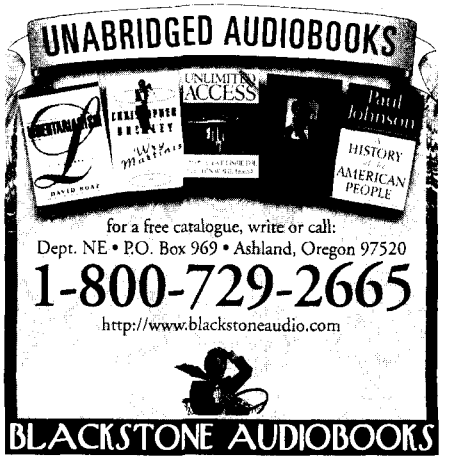

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to get down to 119 lbs again and free thighs entirely of cellulite. Certain everything will be all right then."

Bridget Jones also has a teenager's attitude to men—well, boys. She shuttles frantically between manufactured personas, in the attempt to discover one that will work. One day, she is vowing "not to get upset over men, but instead be poised and cool ice queen." "Aloof, unavailable ice queen," she tells herself. When the ice queen melts, she reinvents herself as a "dusky beauty ... a dark, mysterious object of desire." When that, too, fails to suffice, Bridget settles on Kathleen Tynan, who, she understands from an article, has "inner poise," and was often spotted "immaculately dressed, sitting at a small table in the center of the room, sipping a glass of chilled white wine." "Wish to be like Kathleen Tynan," Bridget writes. "Though not, obviously, dead." Obviously.

This view of the self as an accretion of manufactured "types" and "images," as a blank slate on which qualities can be inscribed or erased in an anxious experimental spirit, is the legacy of women's magazines, the signature tic of what J. Walter Thompson called in 1922 the "beauty editorial style."

The beauty editorial style combined a "light and intimate" tone with a heavy-handed therapeutic sales pitch. It promoted beauty products not as a means of consumption, but as a means of self-definition. These were not ordinary products; they were salvific products, stuff you could buy that could enrich and even redeem you. And so coral fingernails are not just a grooming strategy, but a "mini-adventure." A facial "doesn't just give you a new face—it gives you a whole new outlook on life."

As Kathy Peiss has written recently in *Hope in a Jar* (Metropolitan Books), it was not long before savvy advertisers appropriated the beauty editorial style for their own purpose. And so the same lovely women who peopled the pages of beauty feature pieces now showed up in the adjoining advertisements, explaining that their skin blemishes or lackluster locks had made it impossible for them to really enjoy themselves; but that now all was well, they were their true selves, thanks to a timely trip to the beauty salon.

With the rise of the mass-market cosmetics industry, Peiss writes, the beauty editorial style not only leaked into cosmetics advertising, but colonized the very lineaments of female inner life. By the 1930s, market research showed that women bought rouge not only to put roses in their cheeks, but because they "longed for romance," or "thought perhaps a beautiful complexion would make me more fascinating." The beauty editorial style had quite literally colored the discourse of feminine aspiration.

Bridget Jones's Diary belongs in the literature of the beauty editorial style. But is it a parody or a glorification of it? Bridget, after all, is no crackbrained secretary, à la Cathy Guisewite's cartoon character; she is a metropolitan media chick, who spends her evenings cruising installations and noshing canapés with Julian Barnes. She is not a figure of fun, but a figure of emulation. She is hip enough, in other words, to mock the worldview of the women's magazines even as she succumbs to it. Thus she thinks critically about the images of manufactured beauty that have come to dominate women's consciousness, but only in the midst of the beautification ritual: "My back hurts, my head aches, and my legs are bright red and covered in lumps of wax. Wise people will say that Daniel should like me just as I am, but I'm a child of *Cosmopolitan* culture, have been traumatized by supermodels and too many quizzes; and know that neither my personality nor my body is up to it if left to its own devices."

But the addling effects of *Cosmo* culture are treated only semi-satirically. Her tone of cheerful irony notwithstanding, Bridget's faith in the ideology of the makeover, her determination to express herself entirely on the outside, is entirely in earnest. "This is just ... just ... intolerable," writes Bridget, having just been dumped by her nihilistic heel of a boyfriend. "Am seriously considering face lift." And so the book's tone of smarmy girliness begins to falter, to seem ludicrous and painful. When Bridget's best friend Tom fails to answer his phone for many days, Bridget fears that he is dead, and scours her place for a set of spare keys to his apartment. Then, as is often the case, she gets sidetracked. "Ooooh, *that's* where I put this month's *Marie Claire*—on top of fridge!" she writes. "As flicked through *Marie Claire*, started fantasizing about Tom's funeral, and what I would wear."

This goes on without abatement, day after day, in one entry after another. No other note is struck, no other view of things can be taken. At the end of the year, Bridget is no closer to inner poise, or inner clarity, than she was at the beginning. Yet *Bridget Jones's Diary* is not a cautionary tale, but a success story, a tale of triumph over pitfalls innumerable. She lands her man, snags a glamorous new job, and still makes time for delicious nights of drunken feminist ranting with her clutch of charming friends. Finally she is an astute self-apologist, living out a display of competence even as she talks and writes of the beauties of incompetence.

"It's the shoes," exclaims Ally McBeal as she trips prettily over her four-inch platforms. "The stupid fashion people make us wear these ridiculous things." Nowadays, it is fashionable to criticize the fashion people as a cornerstone of women's oppression; to airily present oneself, as Bridget does, as being "traumatized by supermodels ... a child of *Cosmopolitan* culture." But this sort of counterfeit self-criticism is less a subversion of the beauty editorial style than its ultimate rehabilitation, a new way to exploit and to wallow in what one pretends to deplore. By cloaking its seductions in the distancing lingo of irony and alienation, Bridget Jones makes the beauty editorial style safe for the '90s.

A similar phenomenon may be found in the cool prose of Mary Tannen, who writes a weekly column called "Appearances" for *The New York Times Magazine*. With mischievous sternness, Tannen instructs that "Red on the lips could help bring out a bold new you." Is she serious? Of course not. Is she not serious? Of course not. That is the game. And so she extols the glories of an array of beauty requisites, from Stila Face Gleam to Philosophy Foot Cream, sneaking in subversive snippets from Shakespeare, Tolstoy, and Coleridge just to show that she is in on the joke. She speculates on the root causes of these necessary new unguents: "Could this be a result of global warming?" she writes of the début of a new product by Elizabeth Arden. "Are we as a species subconsciously adjusting to the day when temperate becomes as tropical as the Garden of Eden? ... Will mind and body once again be one?" Meanwhile, tattoos are all the rage—"a way of finding constancy when the rest of life seems to be running on random"; and "our embrace of super soaps can probably be understood in light of a general foreboding that crystallizes around the millennium." Interspersed throughout this overeducated patter are plugs for specific products, the use of which is linked to nothing less than individual fulfillment. And so we learn that the Soho conceptual artists Tony & Tina have just come out with a new product, a nail polish to activate chakras. "Transforming inner being is their primary goal," Tannen writes.

This is propaganda, delivered with a flattering wink of shared superiority. Its very knowingness frees the writer from guilt. And *Bridget Jones's Diary* is the diary of a victim of the propaganda. It is what a terribly unfree spirit thinks a terribly free spirit is like. •

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Righting San Francisco

To the editors:

I would like to clear up some factual points regarding Romesh Ratnesar's San Francisco Postcard ("Sim City," July 13). San Francisco's vote in the June open primary "more or less mirrored those of all California voters" only in the case of Democratic candidates. Dan Lungren, who won the Republican nomination for governor, drew 34 percent of the vote statewide; he got twelve percent in San Francisco. (The trend was similar in the U.S. Senate primary.) Furthermore, Proposition 227, the bilingual education initiative, won statewide, 61 to 39 percent, but in San Francisco it lost, 38 to 62 percent.

Potrero Hill hasn't been a "desolate neighborhood filled with drab shabby warehouses" since Ratnesar's cybergeeks were kids. Home prices there began skyrocketing in the 1980s. Local real estate writers have been including it in lists of "trendy" and gentrified neighborhoods for 15 years.

The distance from San Francisco to Redwood City is 25 miles, not 45.

LANCE WILLIAMS
Berkeley, California

To the editors:

Romesh Ratnesar's San Francisco Postcard read an awful lot like it was written by someone who lives somewhere else. And maybe that shouldn't be a surprise since Ratnesar works for *Time*'s New York office and went to school an hour's drive south of the city.

The Metropolitan that Ratnesar quoted is not something that people here read. It serves mostly as an advertiser in Laundromats and is the neglected orphan to the city's other two major weeklies.

IAN SELDEN
San Francisco, California

To the editors:

Romesh Ratnesar overstates the case that San Francisco is "starting to resemble the rest of America." (I'll believe that when Bondage-A-Go-Go becomes a nationwide event.) Our recent ballot measure "would have lifted rent and eviction controls" *only* on owner-occupied buildings of four or fewer units.

ANDREW G. DULANEY
San Francisco, California

Correction: An incorrect address was listed for letter-writer Leslie Miles (Correspondence, August 31). She lives in Washington, D.C. We regret the error.

GEAR UP WITH THE NEW REPUBLIC

THE NEW REPUBLIC is proud to present the latest in casual apparel: THE NEW REPUBLIC sweatshirt and baseball cap.

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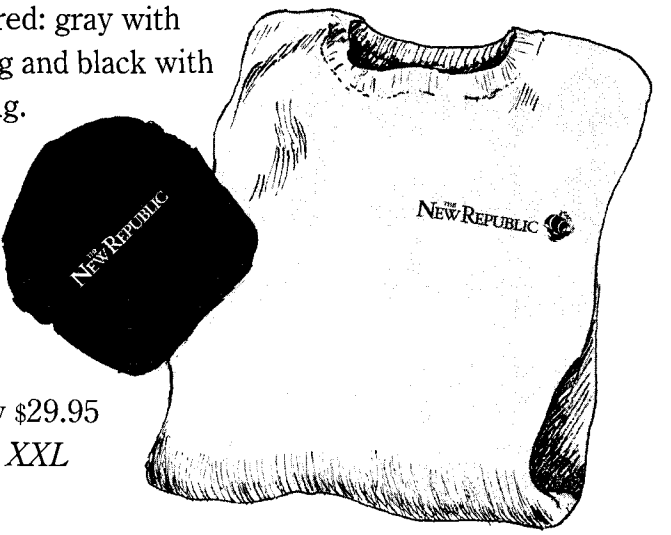

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MOROCCO DIARIST

Hidden hazards

"ATTENTION," COOED A FEMALE voice over the intercom at Paris Orly Airport. "We weesh to remind you zat any item or baggage left unattended will be seestematically destroyed." There was some tittering among us English-speakers in the passport-control line. But the announcement was no joke. Moments later, a high-pitched whistle pierced the air, followed by an ear-splitting "BANG!" For a second, I stood rooted to the spot—unsure whether to hit the floor or make for the nearest exit. Then I noticed that part of the terminal had been blocked off with plastic tape. Near its center, a member of the bomb squad was now opening a large protective case to reveal what remained of the offending valise. It was—or rather, had been—a child-size pink and purple knapsack. I could just make out the charred pages of a coloring book inside.

I HAD EXPECTED TO BE UNSETTLED during this journey, but hardly in France. After all, Orly was merely a stopping point en route to my final destination—Morocco, where, I'd been warned, the harassment from touts, wannabe guides, and con artists would be unrelenting. One friend told of being driven to such desperation during his visit that he'd bought a kaffiyeh and robe in the hope of passing for a native. Unfortunately, his outfit was standard-issue tourist fare—marking him not only as a foreigner but as a particularly gullible one.

SO, AS MY PLANE TOUCHED DOWN in Marrakesh, I braced myself for the worst. Purse pressed to my side, suitcase handle clenched in my fist, I walked with my mother and brother into the arrivals terminal to face what can only be described as a scene of utter . . . placidity! It was as if the entire airport staff had been given the day off. And, instead of fending off touts and hustlers, I was the one stopping people in their paths—asking where I could change money, coaxing a taxi driver into giving us a ride into town. It seems that Morocco's reputation had put such a dent in its tourist industry that the government finally clamped down. Now, anyone other than a licensed guide caught soliciting tourists is subject to several months' imprisonment. To enforce the law, special plainclothes tourist police troll the major tourist centers, on the lookout for unauthorized "faux" guides and other would-be hustlers to arrest.

THE NEW APPROACH SEEMED TO BE working. Still, just in case our airport experience had been an anomaly, we resolved to hire an official guide to help ward off any hasslers on our first day. The decision proved both unnecessary and regrettable. The guide whistled loudly and swung from a scaffolding bar when we tried to linger in the serene courtyard of a fourteenth-century Islamic school; he sulked when we failed to buy anything at an overpriced shop where, presumably, he'd hoped to make a commission. Even his attempts at friendly conversation seemed curiously off: "So," he asked my teenage brother by way of an opening gambit, "is your father dead yet?"

"LET'S DITCH THE GUIDE," my brother whispered at the next opportunity. So we paid him off and said our good-byes. Free to explore this most stunning of cities, we wended our way through its long, dusty passageways, ducking under rounded arches cut into blood-red walls, ambling through lush Andalusian gardens encircling exquisitely carved tombs. At sunset the city's residents streamed into the central square. A mix of Arabs from the East, Berbers from the mountains, and blacks from the Sahara, they seemed dressed as if for a costume party: the women swathed from head to toe in bright purples and pinks, short black veils covering their faces; the men sporting yellow pointed slippers, red fezzes, long white robes with peaked hoods, even flowing blue capes. Medicine men laid their herbs out on the street; snake charmers lent the sinewy wail of their instruments. Then came the food vendors—erecting long tables heaped high with calves' heads, hooves, and other manner of meat—and finally the storytellers, each immediately surrounded by rings of spectators several men deep.

IN FEZ WE INITIALLY PLANNED TO continue our guideless rambling. But, after taking one too many wrong turns through alleyways far more byzantine than those of Marrakesh, we decided to hire the lone "faux" guide who approached us to help with the navigation. Mohammed wasn't government-issue, but we preferred him all the same. He didn't hassle; he didn't distract. Indeed, it quickly became apparent that it was not we, but he, who faced genuine danger. Though not unfriendly, he took care not to be spotted with us. He'd walk a few feet ahead of us, stopping just short of our destination, pointing out the entrance, then slipping out of sight until we reemerged.

EVEN THESE PRECAUTIONS PROVED insufficient. At the door to one of the Islamic schools, or *medersas*, I asked an elderly man with a long white mustache where I could buy some film. "Do you have a guide?" one of his friends piped up. "Yes," I answered—figuring he was trying to land me as a customer. "An *official* guide?" the man snapped. "Uhh, no," I stammered. At this the man whipped out a laminated badge. "I am with the tourist police," he barked. "These faux guides are dangerous people. They will rob you. They are illegal." "Yes, yes," I said in a vague tone, hoping he'd think I'd misunderstood his initial questions.

CONVINCED THAT I HAD just consigned poor Mohammed to the slammer, I stepped inside the *medersa* to work out our next move. My mother and I decided to set off in the wrong direction; then, once we could be sure the coast was clear, we'd circle back to find Mohammed at the rendezvous. As we inched through the throng, my mother cast a swift glance behind us. "Nurith," she whispered, "the man with the mustache is following us." Suddenly three policemen appeared up ahead—their eyes sweeping across the crowd. I felt a tap on my shoulder—it was Mohammed. "Hello," he muttered, as he glided by. The policemen didn't notice, but my brother—at this point completely confused as to what was happening—did. "Hey!" he exclaimed, "there's our guide!"

I GASPED. BUT BY NOW MOHAMMED was far in the distance—the back of his head a dark speck in the crowd. For 15 minutes we followed it. Finally he ducked into a side street. "I'm sorry we did not come to find you—we were worried about the police," I said once we had caught up. "Yes, they were looking for bad people," he answered. "No," I replied, a little irritated. "They were looking for you. And we didn't want to get you in trouble." He paused, then mumbled what sounded like "*Merci*."

WALKING TOWARD MY DEPARTURE gate at Orly on the way home, I was surprised to find the terminal once again blocked off with plastic tape. Then came the whistle, and the deafening "BANG!" By now the routine was familiar. It was unsettling all the same.

NURITH C. AIZENMAN

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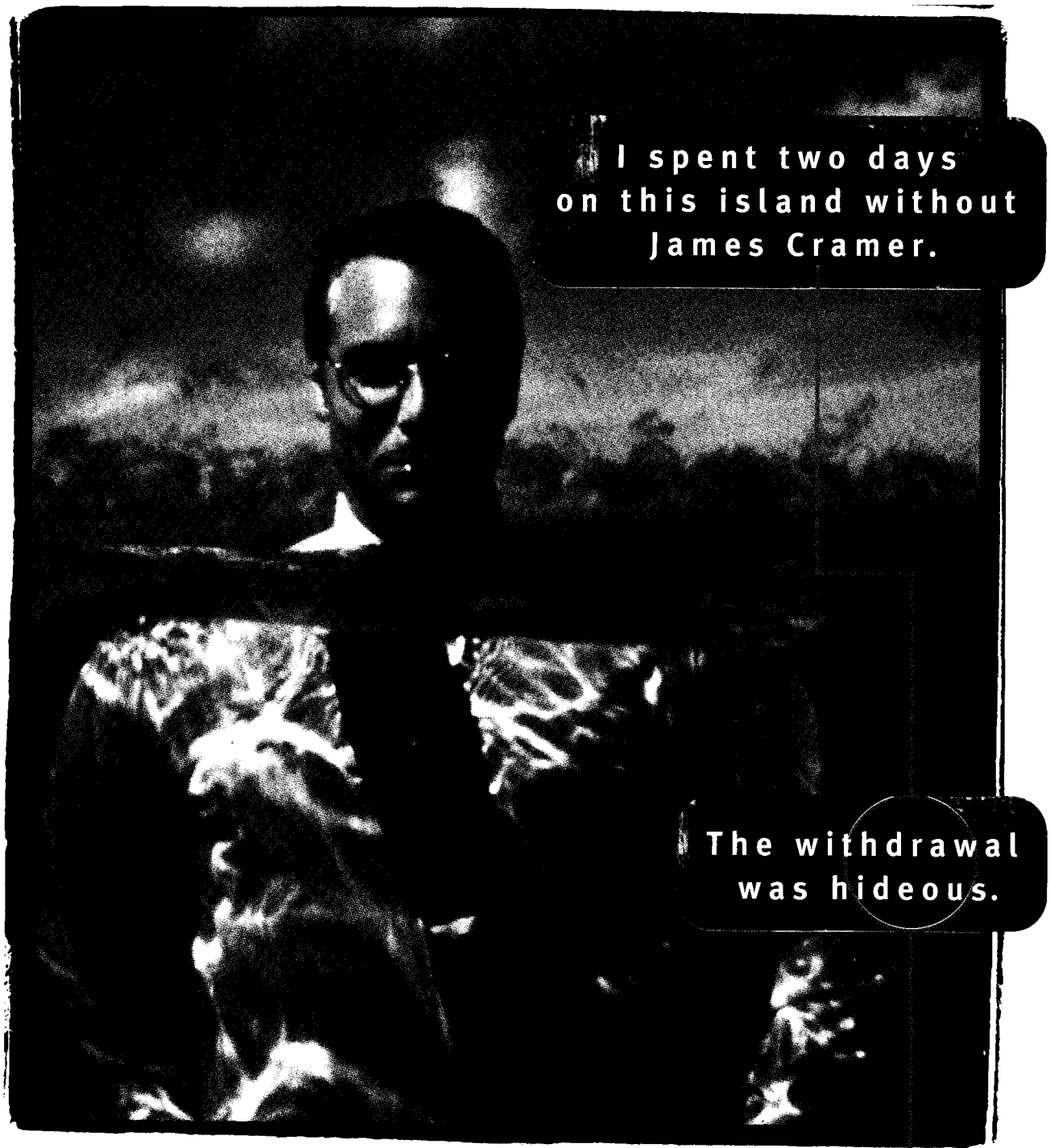

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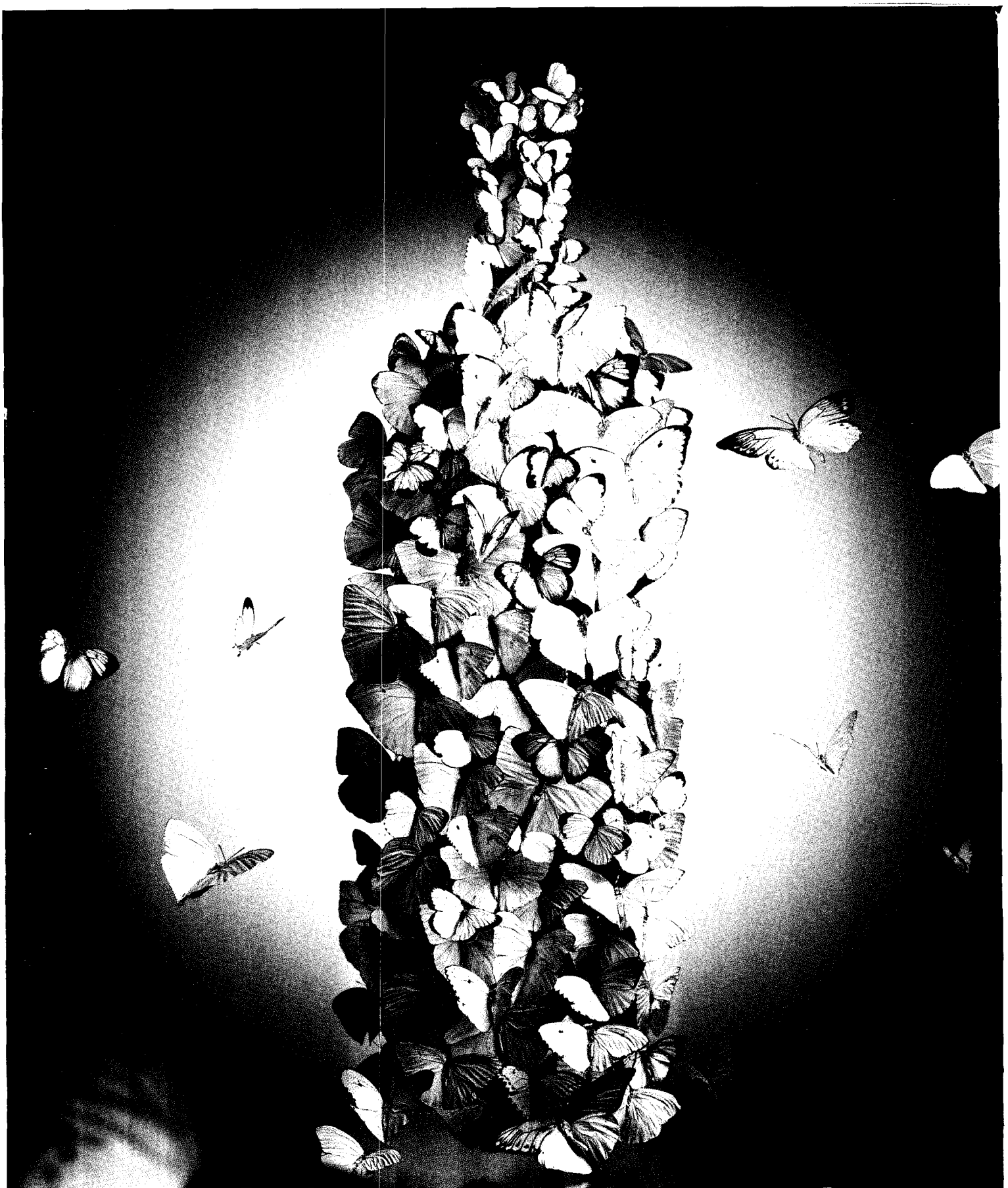

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